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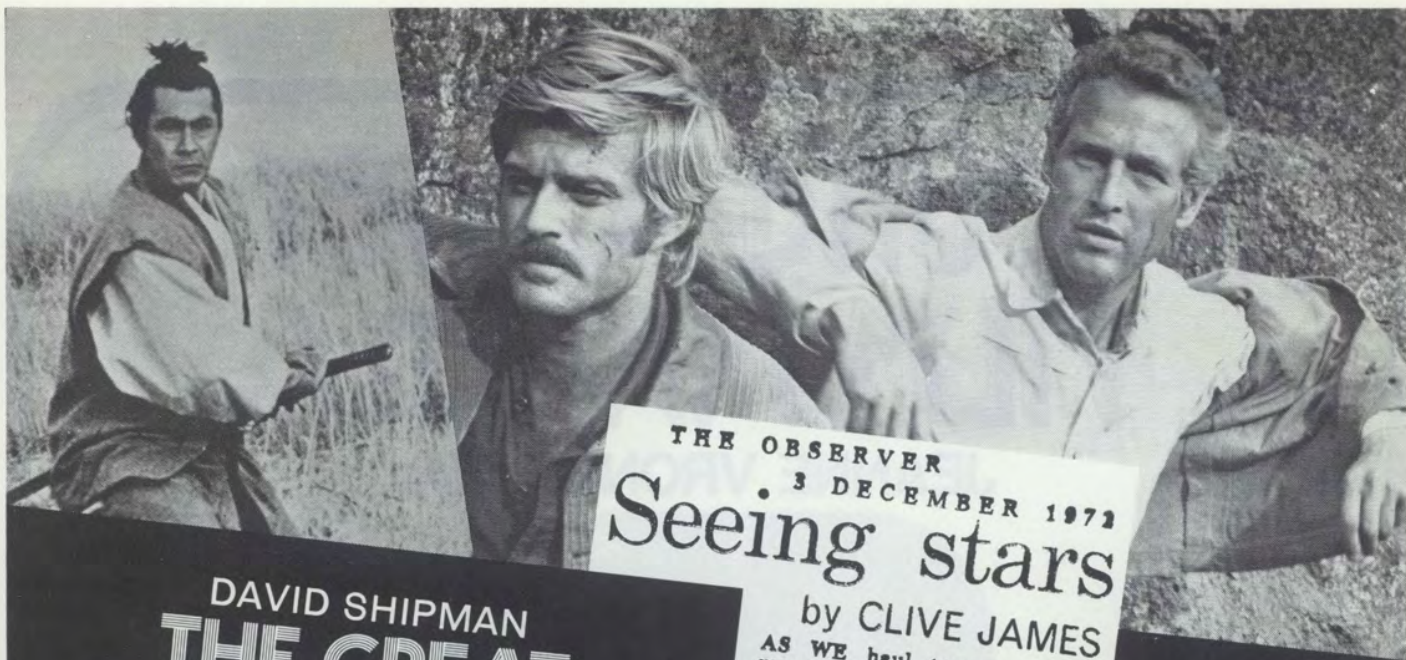
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by CLIVE JAMES

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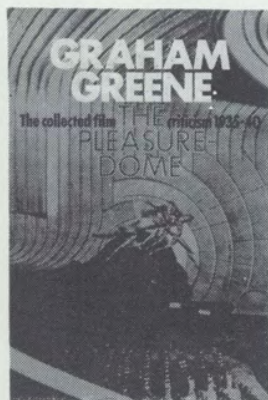
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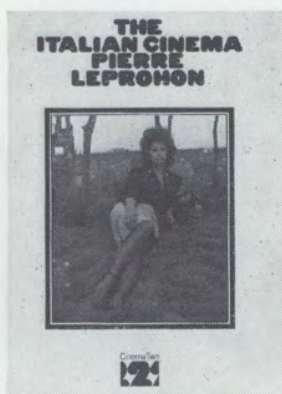
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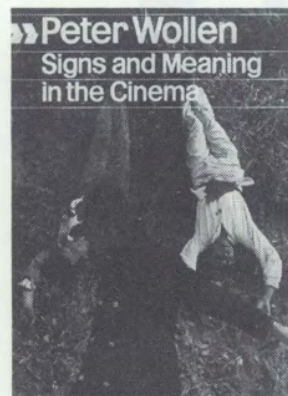
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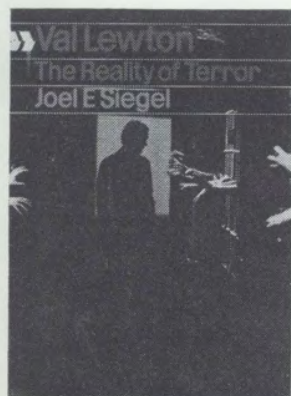
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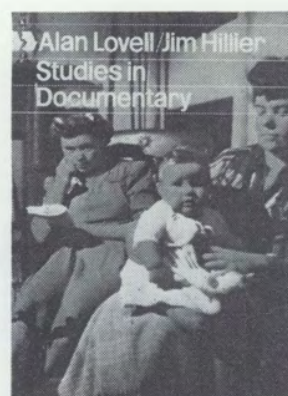
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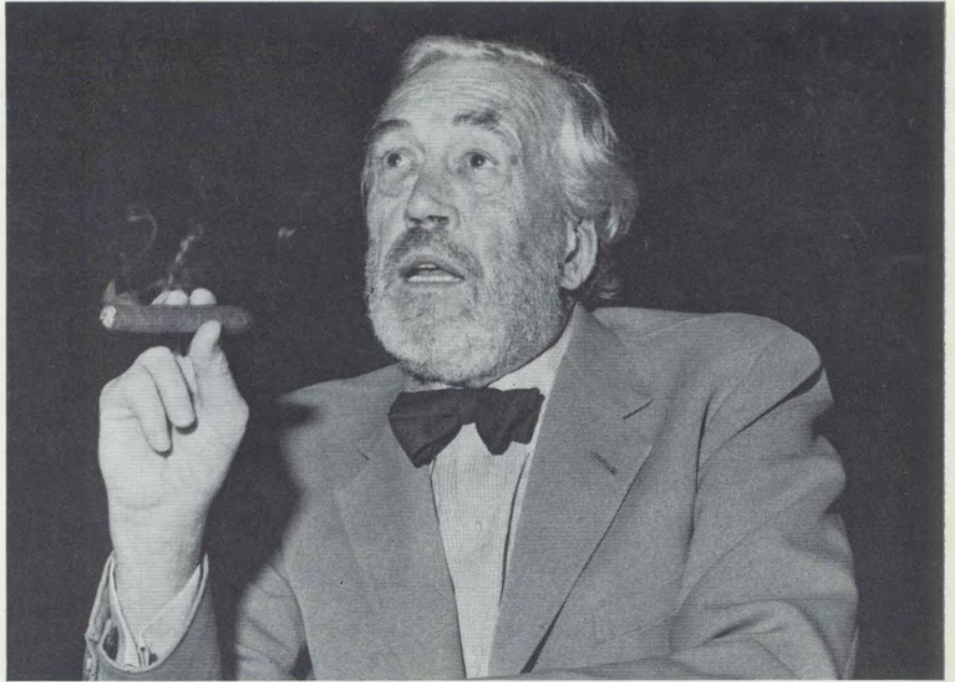
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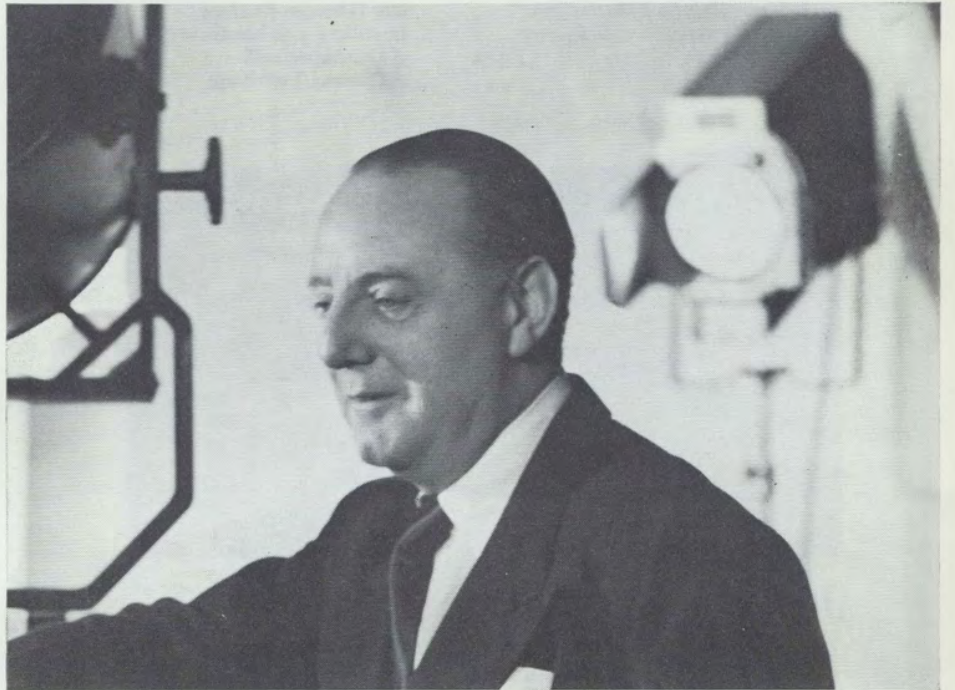
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Victor Saville (photograph by Anthony Buckley)

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WINTER 1972/73

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SIGHT AND SOUND

INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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Interruption as Style



Buñuel's



Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie



Jonathan Rosenbaum

REPORTER: Who are your favourite characters in the movie?

BUNUEL: The cockroaches.

(from an interview in Newsweek)

'Once upon a time . . .' begins *Un Chien Andalou*, in mockery of a narrative form that it seeks to obliterate, and from this title onward, Buñuel's cinema largely comprises a search for an alternative form to contain his passions. After dispensing with plot entirely in *Un Chien Andalou*, *L'Age d'Or* and *Las Hurdes*, his first three films, and remaining inactive as a director for the next fifteen years (1932-47), Buñuel has been wrestling ever since with the problem of reconciling his surrealistic and anarchistic reflexes to the logic of storylines. How does a sworn enemy of the bourgeoisie keep his identity while devoting himself to bourgeois forms in a bourgeois industry? Either by subverting these forms or by trying to adjust them to his own purposes; and much of the tension in Buñuel's work has come from the play between these two possibilities.

Buñuel can always tell a tale when he wants to, but the better part of his brilliance lies elsewhere. One never finds in his work that grace and economy of narration, that sheer pleasure in exposition, which informs the opening sequences of *Greed*, *La Règle du Jeu*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Rear Window*, *Sansho Dayu* and *Au Hasard, Balzazar*. On the contrary, Buñuel's usual impulse is to interrupt a narrative line whenever he can find an adequate excuse for doing so—a joke, ironic detail or startling juxtaposition that deflects the plot's energies in another direction. A typical 'Buñuel touch'—the 'Last Supper' pose assumed by the beggars in *Viridiana*—has only a parenthetical relation to the action, however significant it may be thematically. And lengthier intrusions, like the dream sequences in *Los Olvidados*, tend to detach themselves from their surroundings as independent interludes, anecdotes or parables. For the greater part of his career, Buñuel's genius has mainly expressed itself in marginal notations and insertions. To my knowledge, his only previous attempt at an open narrative structure since 1932 has been *La Voie Lactée*—a picaresque religious (and anti-religious) pageant, much indebted to Godard's *Weekend*, which came uncomfortably close to being all notations and no text, like a string of Sunday school jokes.

If *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie* registers as the funniest Buñuel film since *L'Age d'Or*, probably the most relaxed and controlled film he has ever made, and arguably the first contemporary, global masterpiece to have come from France in the Seventies, this is chiefly because he has arrived at a form that covers his full range, permits him to say anything—a form that literally and figuratively lets him get away with murder. One cannot exactly call his new work a bolt from the blue. But its remarkable achievement is to weld together an assortment of his favourite themes, images and parlour tricks into a discourse that is essentially new. Luring us into the deceptive charms of narrative as well as those of his characters, he undermines the stability of both attractions by turning interruption into the basis of his art, keeping us aloft on the sheer exuberance of his amusement.

Seven years ago, Noël Burch observed that in *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*, Buñuel had at last discovered Form—a taste and talent for plastic composition and a 'musical' sense of the durations of shots

and the 'articulations between sequences'; more generally, 'a rigorous compartmentalisation of the sequences, each of which follows its own carefully worked out, autonomous curve.'* *Belle de Jour* reconfirmed this discovery, but *Le Charme Discret* announces still another step forward: at the age of 72, Buñuel has finally achieved Style.

Six friends—three men and three women—want to have a meal together, but something keeps going wrong. Four of them arrive at the Sénéchals' country house for dinner, and are told by Mme. Sénéchal that they've come a day early; repairing to a local restaurant, they discover that the manager has just died, his corpse laid out in an adjoining room—how can they eat *there*?—so they plan a future lunch date. But each successive engagement is torpedoed: either M. and Mme. Sénéchal (Jean-Pierre Cassel and Stéphane Audran) are too busy making love to greet their guests, or the cavalry suddenly shows up at dinnertime between manoeuvres, or the police raid the premises and arrest everyone. Don Raphael Acosta (Fernando Rey), Ambassador of Miranda—a mythical, campy South American republic resembling several countries, particularly Spain—arranges a secret rendezvous in his flat with Mme. Thévenot (Delphine Seyrig), but M. Thévenot (Paul Frankeur) turns up at an inopportune moment. The three ladies—Mmes. Sénéchal and Thévenot and the latter's younger sister, Florence (Bulle Ogier)—meet for tea, and the waiter regretfully announces that the kitchen is out of tea, coffee, alcohol and everything else they try to order. Still other attempted get-togethers and disasters turn out to be dreams, or dreams of dreams. At one dinner party, the guests find themselves sitting on a stage before a restive audience, prompted with lines; another ends with Don Raphael, after a political quarrel, shooting his host; still another concludes with an unidentified group of men breaking in and machine-gunning the lot of them.

At three separate points in the film, including the final sequence, we see all six characters walking wordlessly down a road, somewhere between an unstated starting place and an equally mysterious destination—an image suggesting the continuation both of their class and of the picaresque narrative tradition that propels them forward. Yet if the previous paragraph reads

Buñuel on set. With Bulle Ogier, Delphine Seyrig and Fernando Rey

*'Two Cinemas,' *Moviegoer* No. 3, Summer, 1966.

like a plot summary, it is deceptive. The nature and extent of Buñuel's interruptions guarantee the virtual absence of continuous plot. But we remain transfixed as though we were watching one: the sustained charm and glamour of the six characters fool us, much as they fool themselves. Their myths, behaviour and appearance—a seductive, illusory surface—carry us (and them) through the film with a sense of unbroken continuity and logic, a consistency that the rest of the universe and nature itself seem to rail against helplessly. Despite every attempt at annihilation, the myths of the bourgeoisie and of conventional narrative survive and prevail, a certainty that Buñuel reconciles himself to by regarding it as the funniest thing in the world.

Interruptions, of course, are a central fact about modern life; as I write this in a friend's apartment, the phone has been ringing about once every two paragraphs. Using this sort of comic annoyance as a structural tool, Buñuel can shoot as many arrows as he wants into our complacencies about narrative, the characters' complacencies about themselves. He exercises this principle of disruption in a multitude of ways, in matters large and small: in the opening scene at the Sénéchals' house, Florence's dopey, indifferent, comic-strip face drifts irrelevantly into the foreground of a shot while other characters chatter about something else behind her, and similar displacements of emphasis abound everywhere.

Take the last attempted dinner. It begins with a red herring which leads us to suspect

poisoning ('I prepared the soup with herbs from the garden'); the conversation is broken off for a cruel exchange with the maid about her age and broken engagement; and while M. Sénéchal demonstrates the correct method of carving lamb, Florence stubbornly insists on pursuing her deadpan astrological profile of Don Raphael. After the gang breaks in to shoot them all, our sense of their total demise—a Godardian image of overlapping corpses—is interrupted when we realise that Don Raphael has hidden under the dinner table, and is reaching for a piece of lamb. Still crouching under the table, he bites savagely into the meat—a comic-terrifying reminder of the dream in *Los Olvidados*—and is finished off by a final blast of gunfire. Lest we suppose that this is the last possible interruption, we next see Don Raphael waking up from his nightmare. He gets out of bed, goes into the kitchen, and opens the refrigerator to take out a plate of lamb.

Every dream and interpolated story in the film carries some threat, knowledge or certainty of death—the central fact that all six characters ignore, and their charm and elegance seek to camouflage. Ghosts of murder victims and other phantoms of guilt parade through these inserted tales, but the discreet style of the bourgeoisie, boxing them in dreams and dinner anecdotes, holds them forever in check. To some extent, Buñuel shares this discretion in his failure to allude to his native Spain even once in the dialogue, although the pomp and brutality of the Franco regime are frequently evoked.

(The recurrent gag of a siren, jet plane or another disturbance covering up a political declaration—a device familiar from Godard's *Made in USA*—acknowledges this sort of suppression.) But the secret of Buñuel's achieved style is balance, and for that he must lean more on irony—an expedient tactic of the bourgeoisie—than on the aggressions of the rebel classes; when he sought imbalance in *L'Age d'Or*, the revolutionary forces had the upper edge. An essential part of his method is to pitch the dialogue and acting somewhere between naturalism and parody, so that no gag is merely a gag, and each commonplace line or gesture becomes a potential gag. Absurdity and elegance, charm and hypocrisy become indistinguishably fused.

Another form of resolution is hinted at in the treatment of a secondary character, Monsignor Dufour (Julien Bertheau), a bishop who is hired by the Sénéchals as a gardener ('You've heard of worker-priests? There are worker-bishops too!'), and figures as clergy-in-residence at many of the abortive dinner parties. Late in the film, he is brought to the bed of an impoverished dying man—a gardener himself—by an old woman who asserts that she's hated Jesus Christ since she was a little girl, and promises to tell him why when she returns from delivering carrots. Dufour then proceeds to attend to the dying gardener, who confesses to having poisoned the bishop's wealthy parents when Dufour was a child. Dufour kindly and dutifully gives him absolution, then lifts up a nearby rifle and shoots the man through the skull.

'Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie'



Thus Buñuel appears to arrive at the conclusion that Catholicism, far from being the natural opponent of Surrealism, is the ultimate expression of it; and it seems strangely appropriate that after this scene both the bishop and the old woman with her promised explanation are abruptly dropped from the film, as though they've suddenly cancelled each other out.

Writing in 1962, Andrew Sarris remarked that Buñuel's 'camera has always viewed his characters from a middle distance, too close for cosmic groupings and too far away for self-identification.' The singular achievement of Buñuel's crystallised style is to allow both these viewpoints to function—to let us keep our distance from the characters while repeatedly recognising our own behaviour in them. Cryptic throwaway lines, illogically repeated motifs and displacements in space and time give the film some of the abstractness of *Marienbad*, yet the richness of concretely observed social behaviour is often comparable to that in *La Règle du Jeu*. A similar mixture was potentially at work in *The Exterminating Angel*—the obvious companion-film to *Le Charme Discret*, with its guests unable to leave a room after finishing dinner. But despite a brilliant script, the uneven execution left too much of the conception unrealised.

Undoubtedly a great deal of credit for the dialogue of *Le Charme Discret* should go to Jean-Claude Carrière, who has worked on the scripts of all Buñuel's French films since *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*: the precise banality of the small talk has a withering accuracy. Even more impressive is the way that Buñuel and Carrière have managed to weave in enough contemporary phenomena to make the film as up-to-date—and as surrealistic, in its crazy-quilt juxtapositions—as the latest global newspaper. Vietnam, Mao, Women's Lib, various forms of political corruption and international drug trafficking are all touched upon in witty and apt allusions. Fernando Rey unloading smuggled heroin from his diplomatic pouch is a hip reference to *The French Connection*, and much of the rest of the film works as a parody of icons and stances in modern cinema.

Florence's neuroticism—as evidenced by her loathing of cellos and her 'Euclid complex'—lampoons Ogier's role in *L'Amour Fou*; Audran's stiff elegance and country house harks back to *La Femme Infidèle*; while Seyrig's frozen, irrelevant smiles on every occasion are a comic variation of her ambiguous *Marienbad* expressions. And as I've already suggested, Godard has become a crucial reference-point in late Buñuel—not only in the parodies and allusions, but also in the use of an open form to accommodate these and other intrusions, the tendency to keep shifting the centre of attention.

A few years ago, Godard remarked of *Belle de Jour* that Buñuel seemed to be playing the cinema the way Bach played the organ. The happy news of *Le Charme Discret* is that while most of the serious French cinema at present—Godard included—seems to be hard at work performing painful duties, the Old Master is still playing—effortlessly, freely, without fluffing a note.

LF LONDON FESTIVAL 1972



'Solaris': Nathalie Bondarchuk

It hasn't on the whole been a good year for the cinema, so thank God for the old atheist. Buñuel's *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie*, arriving like some eleventh hour miracle, was one of the highlights of the 1972 London Festival. Tarkovsky's *Andrei Roublev* would have been another, but a different kind of fate robbed us of this obviously blighted film, and the chance to compare it with his mind-bending *Solaris*. Otherwise, in a disappointing year this was a disappointing festival, though as SIGHT AND SOUND went to press during the festival's last week there was at least the promise of several unknown quantities. What follows is a small selection from over fifty features (at the last count) screened at the festival. Other films (*Company Limited*, Teshigahara's *Summer Soldiers*, *Red Psalm*, Oshima's *Dear Summer Sister*) have been reviewed from European festivals.

And what of the rest? This is not the place to debate the purpose of a film festival; but the sheer volume of films at the 1972 festival prompts a few questions. In the first place, if by general consensus 1972 was not a vintage year, it would seem to follow that a larger than ever selection must involve some scraping of the barrel. And though London (mercifully) avoids the jamboree atmosphere of some festivals, there is a sense in which a festival film is an event—and promoted as such. Perhaps it's a bad thing, but a festival film inevitably invites expectations. London is after all heralded as the festival of festivals, the pick of the year's best. As it turned out, 1972 was a year in which too many expectations were dashed within half an hour's screen time.

The expansion of the festival in recent years (twice as many films in 1972 as there were four years ago) has brought many advantages, not least the opportunity to include more independent cinema and films from countries which four years ago

scarcely had a cinema at all. But all the advantages, as Christopher Mason's film graphically demonstrated, are not necessarily beneficial. A few years ago it was a safe bet that you would either love or hate what London offered; in 1972 it was more a case of you pays your money and you takes your choice—and pot luck it was. One might justify the choice of the not very startling *Traces*, for instance, on the grounds that it marks the beginnings of an independent cinema in Morocco, which might otherwise have missed the recognition it may deserve. But six new features from Japan seemed two films too many.

If there is a conclusion to be drawn from London 1972, it may not be very encouraging. The 1971 festival prompted a speculation that the cinema seemed to be at a crossroads, healthily striking out in new directions. In 1972, and it's been an impression of the year as well as of this festival, some of these roads have looked more like cul-de-sacs.

Andrei Tarkovsky/Solaris

Although the idea of a planet that adjusts itself to suit its human explorers is not unusual in science fiction (Bradbury made an early excursion with his short story *Here There Be Tygers*), the world of *Solaris* has a unique potency. It is the creation of Stanislaw Lem, a Polish writer almost unknown in the West despite his allegiances to Asimov, Van Vogt, and other contributors to the magazine *Astounding* in the 1950s. While the film of *Solaris* (written in 1961) seems unlikely to transform Lem overnight into another Clarke or Burgess, whose writings are in every sense more accessible, it should at least confirm to a wider public the harsh brilliance of his vision, in which surrealism and cybernetics orbit each other like twin moons.

To separate Lem from Tarkovsky in discussing the latter's film of *Solaris* is too elaborate an exercise for a short review, but a necessary comment must be that Tarkovsky has declined nearly all invitations to special effects and emphasises instead the novel's domestic, personal aspects. Where 2001 could be accused of omitting human interest in favour of spectacular gadgetry, *Solaris* is almost the exact reverse. The film is constructed around the private life of Kelvin, an astronaut psychologist sent to investigate strange happenings on the space-station circling Solaris, a mystery planet with a viscous, flowing surface, and an atmosphere of livid, unsettling colours.

Kelvin's country home, shared with his father, provides the unexpected Dovzhenko-style opening and even more startling close to the film, and there are several references back to this environment (becoming significantly more glacial) in which he is also glimpsed as a child. Tarkovsky ventures, in fact, upon the territory which Lem sign-posted but left unexplored, with the result that the astronaut's gloomily detached outlook and the effect upon him of the *Solaris* phenomena become clearer, more intelligible, and more emotionally charged. Most importantly, where Lem ended in characteristic Quixotic ambivalence between hope and failure, with a 'faith that the time

of cruel miracles was not past,' Tarkovsky demonstrates with something of a conjuror's flourish that the miraculous is actively in evidence.

The *Solaris* miracle is a process whereby the planet fathoms fears and memories buried in the minds of its observers, and externalises these into living reconstructions, either several metres high on its own surface, or life-size within the space-station. Confrontation with the apparently genuine skeleton from one's own closet is understandably disturbing, and Kelvin arrives on his investigation to find that one member of the three-man crew has committed suicide and the others are grappling distractedly with their tangible hallucinations. It takes only one night's sleep for Kelvin's own worst recollections to take on flesh and blood. His beautiful wife, Hari, who on Earth had killed herself when he abandoned her, reappears in his cabin all the more beautiful for having been compiled from his anguished mental picture of her lost perfections. He knows she's a fake, but any effort to dispose of the creature results only in fresh suffering for them both.

In the tradition of Poe, *Solaris* concerns itself more with the traumatic discomfiture of unexpected resurrection than with the long-term consequences; and indeed this proves to be Tarkovsky's point. The seething planet, turbulent metaphor as much for an imperfect deity as for the psychoanalyst's couch, provides what the men come to recognise as a mirror of themselves, reflecting with inescapable clarity the faults which caused the errors now incarnate before them. Kelvin's relationship with his wife is duplicated in his uneasy tolerance of the new Hari, who like the real wife is finally driven to suicide. 'Lately we weren't getting on too well,' he says weakly. And the reasons, the *only* reasons Tarkovsky has shown us, stem from Kelvin's upbringing—from the conflicting personalities of his parents, the bitter snowscapes of his childhood. Driven to recall the elusive affection of his mother, Kelvin at last realises why his marriage never had a chance, and the omniscient planet is then standing by to take him to the next stage of his self-analysis

by placing him at the feet of a surrogate father.

If mankind could only understand itself better, it would have an illustrious future—the genesis of the Starchild is subtly repeated in *Solaris* to the accompaniment of passages from Bach, allusions to Faust and Luther, and the occasional pause for impressive if familiarly Sovexport rhetoric ('Man strives for a goal he fears and does not need . . . what Man needs is Man'). But where alien intervention was impersonal in 2001, Tarkovsky's film notably breaks new ground in exploring the pathos of an alien struggle to conform to the ways of men. Whether tearing her bloody way through steel doors, recovering damply from death by liquid oxygen, or tremulously experimenting with the hazards of sleep, Hari (Nathalie Bondarchuk) is the most seductively tragic other-worlder the cinema has yet shown us. And as a whole *Solaris* is the nearest the cinema has come to capturing the complexities of modern science fiction, with its intermingling of time and memory, acute uneasiness, and emphasis on elegance and style. The immaculately photographed space-station, jumbled with baroque incongruities reminiscent of Tarkovsky's battle landscapes in *Ivan's Childhood*, is a superbly designed labyrinth of inarticulate panic, a memorable symbol of the disordered human mind.

PHILIP STRICK

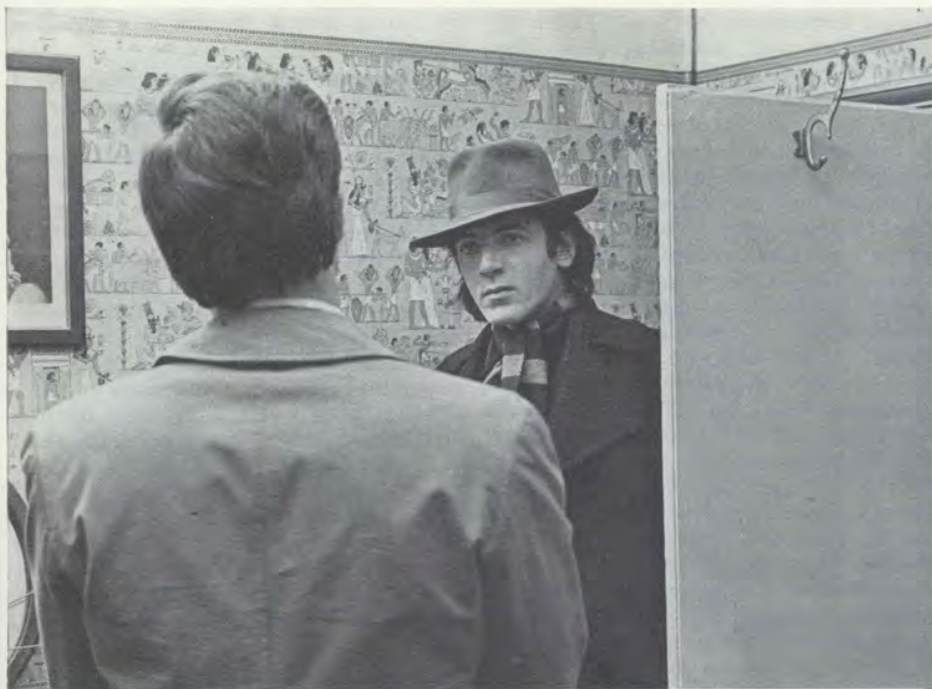
Henry Jaglom / A Safe Place

A little girl gazes entranced from her window as a magician makes a silver ball float through the air; a young woman looks back from the same window in an attempt to recapture the magic of her memory. Existing simultaneously in a world where time is suspended and events occur at will in past or present, dream or reality, these two images are the anchor-pieces of *A Safe Place*. Twin poles of nostalgia, objective and subjective, they irradiate the film with a sense of loss that is echoed, soothingly and hypnotically, by the stream of old songs ('I'm Old Fashioned', 'Give Me Something to Remember You By', 'Someone to Watch Over Me') which accompany Susan, self-styled Noah (Tuesday Weld), as she tries desperately to launch her ark of childhood on a sea of reassurance that there is safety in memories and regrets.

'Tomorrow is where the past is,' she retorts when the young man who loves her asks why she is always thinking of the past, never of tomorrow; and she retreats timidly, persistently, from current entanglements, hoping that her magician, conjured from memory, will be able to restore the ecstasy of the moment when once, as a very small child, she flew like the silver ball to the top of a pear-tree. Delicately orchestrating Susan's dilemma in terms of both image and movement, Henry Jaglom employs stasis to characterise Fred (Philip Proctor), the prosaic young man who sits at her feet, holding her earthbound with his doggily uncomprehending devotion; a ceaselessly circling camera for Mitch (Jack Nicholson), the lover who sweeps casually in from the past to cut the ties which bind her to Fred and then disappears, leaving

'A Safe Place': Tuesday Weld, Orson Welles





'Adult Fun': Peter Marinker

her free but helplessly adrift; and for the Magician (Orson Welles) who teasingly holds out the sign she is waiting for, the rainbow which will herald her safe return from the deluge of living, a mysteriously hovering presence which is neither reality nor fantasy, neither movement nor immobility.

Yet *A Safe Place* is not merely a Freudian whimsy about a fixated girl appealing to the security of a father-figure from her childhood. Cut into and completing its rondo on the theme of nostalgia are two contrasting episodes. First, the monologue by the tearfully suicidal girl (Gwen Welles) who explains how she was terrified of being beaten up by drunks in the Bowery until she found herself among them in the street; though still aware that she may be attacked, she is no longer afraid because she no longer feels isolated. Second, the bizarre *angst* revealed by a young man who was worried because his pet cat might fall ill; now it has indeed fallen ill, and he is worried because he is worried that it may die.

What Jaglom is after is that elusive sense of reconciliation where happiness and unhappiness are held in precarious balance, but which is invariably lost because human beings cannot resist the temptation either to anticipate or recapitulate. Living in the present, Mitch's answer is to destroy the past (he 'murders' his ex-loves) and let the future take care of itself; while Fred's is to take care of the future by letting the past destroy itself (dwelling on painful memories, he says, makes one bad company). But for Susan, whose tomorrow is in the past, that reconciliation can only be achieved by annihilating time—by annihilating, in other words, the emotions of anticipation or recapitulation which threaten it. Here Jaglom rejoins the Godard of *Une Femme est une Femme*, and there is no better apology for *A Safe Place* than Godard's commentary on that film: 'If you see a bouquet of flowers on a table, does it mean something? It doesn't prove anything about anything. I simply hoped that the

film would give pleasure. I meant it to be contradictory, juxtaposing things which didn't necessarily go together, a film which was gay and sad at the same time.'

Most of the time, with Tuesday Weld capping her sweater-orgy from *Lord Love a Duck* with a spiralling fantasy about the sexual properties of telephone numbers, and Orson Welles solemnly trying to prove that he is a real magician in a succession of fruitless attempts to make something—anything—disappear, *A Safe Place* is delightfully, eccentrically funny. Most of the time, too, it is sad and yearning, weighed down by the fears which are steadily driving the heroine to suicide in her inability to cope with life. Yet there is no contradiction in the contradiction, for in this mysterious haven, this safe place where past, present and future have no meaning any more, happiness and unhappiness become one. 'Can you tell me a story?' asks Susan at the beginning of her odyssey. 'Last night, in my sleep,' begins the Magician, 'I dreamed that I was sleeping, and dreaming in that sleep that I had awakened, I fell asleep . . .'

TOM MILNE

Wim Wenders/*The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*

Since the hero of Wim Wenders' film seems to exhibit all the textbook symptoms of alienation—lack of response to people matched by an exaggerated response to his mechanical or inanimate surroundings—critics have rushed self-reassuringly to Camus' *L'Etranger* for comparison. In fact, *The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty* begins, if anything, where Camus' novel leaves off. Joseph Bloch is not alone in his sickness, a moody and aloof anti-hero, but simply a more conspicuous victim—more self-aware and less busily hypocritical than his fellows—of the atrophying responses of the society he lives in. His name, Bloch, suggests a deadened sensibility, his profession, a goalkeeper, one man's isolation in a field of

frenetic activity. And the hero's one gesture towards proving that he is alive and present, by murdering a girl, fails because the society around him is too myopic to recognise him as the killer.

The story's tensions, and its humour, derive from our knowledge that although Bloch is self-evidently near the end of his tether, he will never actually have the comfort of reaching it. Wenders' frontier village, a marvellously Kafkaesque creation, is in a state of total stasis. The border itself is closed, and communication has broken down not only between people and people (an old schoolmaster complains that the new generation of schoolchildren is totally inarticulate; a missing child, first described as 'crippled', is later announced to be 'dumb'), but between people and their surroundings (the local policeman walks with exaggerated caution in case he treads insensibly on a hedgehog). Meanwhile, objects pile up uselessly in the streets (a heap of rotting melons on the pavement) or accumulate in the houses. The proprietress of the Border Inn, whose share of the universal ennui is indicated punningly in her name Hertha Gabler, waits perpetually for a delivery of new furniture.

Curiously, though, the film's sense of impasse is never oppressive. Bloch's emotional detachment is for him a form of invulnerability. The only time in the film that he demonstrates emotion is on the football field—waving an angry fist at the referee's refusal to disallow the penalty goal—and in a sense what the film sets out to do is to show the negative side of an obsession. We do not see much of Bloch's enthusiasm for his game, but we do see his indifference to everything else. And the reason the film's steadiness of mood is exhilarating rather than deadening is that it is the steadiness of a virtuoso tightrope walk between despair and a saving nihilistic humour.

The film's style conveys exactly this feeling of strained stillness, embodied in Wenders' static shots and clean framing, in the banal phrase-book dialogue (written by Peter Handke, on whose first novel the film was based) and in the emphasis on the

'*The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*': Kai Fischer, Arthur Brauss



menace of objects (close-ups of the wheeling discs in a juke-box, the amplified sounds of cutlery, or beer pouring into a glass). From the opening sequence indeed, which shows us Bloch's failure to save a penalty kick and his sullen departure from the match, the emotional temperature inexorably drops. A succession of short scenes—Bloch looking for an evening paper, Bloch going to the cinema—appear and quickly die (by constant fadeouts), while the central scene of the girl's murder is staged with a totally disarming casualness. Bloch strangles her during some idle love play, the screen fades, Bloch wakes from a short sleep to tidy up and clear his incriminating fingerprints, and then quietly walks out.

We almost need to be reminded—as we are intermittently by the dirge-like brass chords which punctuate the film's early sequences—that Bloch's story is a kind of tragedy, his Hamlet-like irresolution linked to the goalkeeper's destructive hesitancy before his opponent's ability to bluff and double-bluff, just as his mounting sense of personal insignificance is embodied in a last-scene comment that the goalkeeper is the one player on the field whom *nobody* watches. The film duly ends with a total paralysis of movement. Walking out of the village, Bloch attempts to make a call to town, but discovers the public telephone has been vandalised; a bus pulls up at the roadside, but he declines to board it. Last of all, the film returns to the football ground, where Bloch, now a spectator and not a player, explains to a bemused member of the crowd the full tragic implications of the goalkeeper's role.

NIGEL ANDREWS

James Scott/Adult Fun

With his excellent film about Richard Hamilton, James Scott helped to reanimate the languid form of the 'art documentary'. What his camera explored was not so much the polished surface of the painter's works as the fragments—of imagery, information and experience—that had combined to provoke their final form. The newspaper headlines, film clips and neon signs which assailed the eye were matched by a disconnected but coherent commentary from Hamilton himself, so that the film emerged less as a standard monument to the created work than as a lively demonstration of the creative process: a journey through the artist's mind, anchored to the now immutable reality of his finished canvases and silk-screens; a description of the process whereby the arbitrary is made absolute.

For his first feature, *Adult Fun*, Scott employs a similarly fragmented technique. The film's surface is a mixture of semi-documentary observation, *ciné-vérité* interviews, improvised and scripted dialogue scenes, and at least one brief 'fantasy' insert; while on the soundtrack, spoken exchanges are tugged from naturalism to formal thriller by the sudden intrusions of Simon Standage's highly charged score and linked by the hero's voice-over commentary—a stream of self-consciousness compounded of such diverse sources as Sartre, Céline and the *Evening Standard*. Unlike the Hamilton film, however, *Adult Fun* is itself the canvas it seeks to illuminate. Its metaphysical specu-



'Minamata': the shareholders' meeting

lations, moored to no convincingly sustained reality, ultimately founder in a sea of contradictions and imprecision.

Which is by no means to suggest that the film is lacking in plot. A moderately unsuccessful stockbroker, bored with his middle-class wife and—with his introspective doubts and furtive consummations—increasingly boring to his liberated girl friend, Chris Thompson (Peter Marinker) dreams of affirming his identity through some act of violent revolt. ('I should like something new to happen... I think of the Middle East... even the war.') He establishes contact with a firm of 'contract cleaners' and, furnished with a gun and £300, prepares to spy on the secret dealings of a crooked industrialist who conveniently takes him on as his PR man. Mistaking the private detective sent to spy on him by his meddling mother-in-law for an underworld rival, Chris brutally murders him; and himself meets a sudden death while being tortured in St. John's Wood by the industrialist's incompetent thugs.

Unfortunately, the patent absurdities of the plot do little to substantiate Chris' musings about the more general absurdity of the human condition. Scott, who also wrote the screenplay, seems uncertain whether to opt for social satire, social realism or metaphysical speculation. He surrounds his hero with a gallery of caricatures (camp detective, middle-class in-laws, stiff-lipped boss, and a gangster who looks like something from the chorus line of *Guys and Dolls*), yet allows them to depart from type whenever this serves to advance the plot or to enforce one of his several themes. On an unlikely family outing to Ramsgate, the father-in-law reminisces about Chamberlain and World War II, not from behind the potted palms of some refined hotel but from inside a chrome-and-plastic ice-cream parlour. His genteel wife suddenly produces a dubious past in provincial rep which enables her to precipitate the private detective (another fallen star) into the plot.

Yet the film's rather heavy-handed satire on the intricacies and implications of the British class system is balanced by moments of astute observation. The coffee bar where

Chris holds a fidgety meeting with his girl friend (Deborah Norton), the room in which he hides out from the law, the Ramsgate ice-cream parlour, the detective's Piccadilly office—all of these have an imposing reality which the characters inhabiting them seem generally to lack. Thematically this supports the hero's remark (from Sartre's *Nausea*) that 'objects ought to be useful, but they touch me; it's unbearable.' But unlike Sartre, Scott fails to sustain a universe in which objects are consistently more 'touching' than people. Chris' downtrodden wife Mary (Judy Libert) springs sympathetically to life and his defence when the police invade their home; the prostitute with whose monologue the film ends has a poignant and indisputable authenticity.

The character who fails totally to touch us is Chris himself. One of his many introspective statements ('I can only retrieve scraps of images, but I am unclear whether they are real or imaginary') possibly holds the key to the film Scott thought he was making, but it might equally provide the epitaph for the film he has in fact made. Chris remains as distanced from us as the people he meets, hurts or destroys are from him. Verbally, he may suggest to us the crisis through which he is passing. But the acts of violence—given or received, real or imaginary—to which this leads him lack the authority of one of Richard Hamilton's collages, or of the *Evening Standard* headlines (about Sewell or Martha Docherty) with which he punctuates his thoughts.

JAN DAWSON

Noriaki Tsuchimoto/Minamata

Pollution, once varieties of rodeo and revolution have been exhausted, seems likely to be the commercial cinema's next big subject. So far, it's been a theme largely confined to horror movies (civilisation threatened by plant mutations and the like) and television doomsday serials. Meanwhile, and before pollution becomes a saleable proposition in radical chic cinema, a few documentary

film-makers have been concerned to record a few unadulterated facts. *Minamata* is one such document, evidence assembled by Noriaki Tsuchimoto during 1971, when this particular manifestation of industrial pollution, Minamata disease, briefly made international headlines. *Minamata* is a horror film, but its facts are more disturbing than any horror fiction.

It's difficult to comment on *Minamata* without falling back on a set of worthy liberal clichés. The few hundred people who saw it during the London Festival don't want to know that I was as moved and shocked by it as they were. Nevertheless, it seems worth recording, both as a film in its own right and because as yet there are no plans for wider distribution. So this is by way of an appeal for the film. Sympathetic distributors discouraged by the prospect of a didactic tract or a simplistic propaganda exercise need not be. The film is neither of these; nor is it a mere recitation of the facts of Minamata poisoning, though its emphasis throughout is factual.

What has become known as Minamata disease is mercury poisoning, caused by the assimilation of inorganic mercury compounds discharged into the sea as industrial waste. The disease was detected long before scientists had heard of Minamata, but is so called because in this fishing community on the Japanese island of Kyushu its incidence was concentrated and devastating. The source of the disease is an aceto-aldehyde plant which in the early 1950s began using inorganic mercury compounds to increase production. Result: uncontrolled waste discharge, poisoned fish, and for the people who eat them a strange disease which intoxicates the nervous system and is characterised by ataxia, which can mean anything from slurred speech to complete loss of bodily control and a slow and agonising death.

Noriaki Tsuchimoto and his team have documented the progress of this obscenity from its first appearance in 1953, through an unsuccessful attempt by the local fishermen to break into the plant and stop production (the unions, not surprisingly, thwarted this direct action), to government recognition of the disease fifteen years after the first death, and from this the development of organised dissent, culminating in a direct confrontation between the chemical company and the surviving victims of the disease. A good deal of the film is taken up with interviews with Minamata patients and relatives of the dead, but the emphasis is not, as it might have been, on the physical degradations (there are only a few, mercifully brief seconds of the effects of a scientist's experiments with mercury poisoning in cats). The film's method, and its powerful effect, is a gradual and progressively disturbing accumulation of the facts of this pollution as it has affected the people of Minamata.

What these people have to say is often harrowing. There is the woman who watched her husband shouting in pain through the night and felt she had to apologise to the neighbours for the disturbance; there is the boy whose lively eyes and disconcertingly loaded replies to the interviewer's questions belie his slurred speech, until he cries halt to the interview, his very private strength momentarily exhausted; there are the children in hospital, hopeless cases except to the doctor who with infinite patience is

teaching them to count. Amazingly, what emerges from this view of shattered lives is nothing like despair; indeed there are moments when the catalogue of distress is leavened by humour (albeit black), like a wily old fisherman's demonstration of how he catches octopus, by biting them between the eyes. The film's slow, deliberate construction of detail movingly records a community coming to terms with disaster. In their own words, these 'country bumpkins from Minamata', as they call themselves when they tour cities to raise funds for their campaign, reveal their progression from desperation ('I used to wonder how the political system worked,' bemoans a woman silenced by a Ministry official) through anger (let one of the chemical company's executives drink some mercury-poisoned water) to a determination to claim their right to more than a letter of apology and a miserable reparation from the company.

Private incapacity is gradually transformed into public political action; and eventually the political and economic motives which first introduced mercury poisoning to this fishing community are challenged on their home ground, at the company shareholders' meeting when the Minamata patients' committee, now shareholders themselves and symbolically dressed in funeral white, disrupt the company's attempt at public apology. There's a moment's sympathy for the embattled company president as he tries to speak across the din of protest. But what can he possibly have to say?

The film ends with the fishing boats of Minamata putting to sea; pollution has ended some lives, but it hasn't killed the community. Mercury poisoning or no, there will still be those who like the victim in the film can't resist the taste of red mullet. The implication is that the Minamata pollution should never have happened; the certainty is that it or something like it will happen again (page one headline in this morning's newspaper: 'Thalidomide: £5m offer angers critics'). But at least in Minamata, and against all the odds, a few small victories have been won; and through *Minamata* a few more people will be aware of it.

DAVID WILSON

Marco Bellocchio/ In the Name of the Father

Bellocchio's heroes are animated by a mysterious electric spark which threatens to explode in spontaneous combustion. One need only think of Sandro in *I Pugnì in Tasca*, battering his body against immovable objects, or Camillo feverishly distorting his own mirror-image in *La Cina è Vicina*. And like Frankenstein's monster, frustrated in their aspiration to common dignity, they are haplessly impelled towards destruction. The interesting thing about the protagonist of *Nel Nome del Padre*—unmistakably labelling him as no hero at all—is that these manifestations of frustration have been transferred to everyone else, leaving him to march erect and unimpeded through the film, and leaving the audience to wonder whether he is oppressor or oppressed.

The setting is a school run by Catholic fathers, a sort of approved institution for the sons of rich bourgeois rejected as hopeless by other establishments. No prizes for guessing,

with the priests muddling through a ritual of authority at the head of the hierarchy and illiterate peasants serving as kitchen slaves at the bottom, that this is designed as an image of Italy. The allegory, however, is lifted into something much more concrete by the atmosphere of total manic depression. In class, a teacher stares impassively at his pupils, who stare blankly back. One boy, followed by another, secretively bends to tie his shoelace. Behind his desk-lid the teacher rolls a pair of dice. All the boys now seem bent double. And Bellocchio compounds the sense of dislocation, held in uneasy equilibrium by those twin stares, with an image of one boy defying anatomy to sleep with his head inside his desk.

The disorientation starts almost from the beginning, with the school suggesting alternatively a prison (with its galleries, guards and locked doors, the dormitory block might be lifted direct from *The Criminal*), or an asylum in which everyone is secretly gratifying his fruitless fantasies. A priest meditates under the lid of a coffin-like chest; an assistant prowls by night, spreading aimlessly blasphemous graffiti on the walls; a pupil masturbates dreamily through a lecture on the terrible wages of sin. And in this madhouse of inertia the only moment of common purpose comes when everyone crowds round to gape into the mouth of a missionary whose tongue has been mutilated by Chinese communists and who looms into the camera, as demonically compelling as Rasputin, to lisp the unfathomable word of God.

Literally beaten into this slough of despond by a father demanding respect but receiving a fist in the face (a galvanically funny opening scene), comes Angelo Transeunti (Yves Beneyton). Cool and inflexible, he remains withdrawn from the frenzy about him, obsessed within by his belief in the power of power and by the need to create freedom, order and purpose. But his revolt against the system, escalating wildly in scope and ambition, is simply absorbed, leaving no change. Hence the snarling anger of the film, which chronicles a lost opportunity: for the time is 1958-59, a moment following the death of Pope Pius XII when it seemed that the old era had finally ended for Italy and that a new age might begin. Hence, too, its image, which would otherwise be pure fantasy, of a clergy hovering uncertainly between old and new, smiling at blasphemies and wondering if this might be the new dogma.

Transeunti (and by implication his revolt) is neatly characterised in an early sequence where he casually takes up a boy's idle boast that for ten thousand lire he would hang for an hour from the rings in the gym. Later, when the sweating, pain-wracked boy re-emerges, impelled to confess that he fell off four minutes before time, Transeunti simply snaps his wallet shut. He is, in other words, an idealist cushioned by wealth and privilege into inhumanity, a budding Mussolini by any other name; and his total disregard for the human element—whether pulling his schoolfellows in his wake like so many sheep, or irritably urging a fellow-conspirator to shoot his manically possessive mother—is the key to both his rebellion and its failure.

An Interview
with
Raoul Walsh
by
James Childs

CAN YOU RIDE THE HORSE?

Walsh on location



In 1972 Raoul Walsh reached his eighty-fifth birthday. Physically speaking, he isn't the same Raoul Walsh who directed Gloria Swanson, Ida Lupino, Victor McLaglen, Clark Gable, Douglas Fairbanks, Humphrey Bogart, Theda Bara, James Cagney and so many others between 1912-1963; nor is he the same man who acted in films until he lost an eye in a car accident in 1928. But Raoul Walsh is still a very vigorous man, and one of the few still alive whose life reaches back so profoundly into the beginnings of American film history. A great storyteller on film, Walsh is also a fine raconteur in person.

In William Bayer's interesting *Breaking Through, Selling Out, Dropping Dead*, he spends a number of pages on the difference between a 'heavy' and a 'junior'. By any definition of those terms, Walsh is a 'heavy', an apparently no-nonsense film-maker who got his job done and done well, and when it was done it was appreciated by audiences everywhere.

There's not much biographical information on you in English. What I have is that you were born in New York City on March 11, 1892...

WALSH: '87.

You were educated at Seton Hall University...

No. I didn't have that much education. My family moved to Texas [around Del Rio, near the Texas-Mexican border] soon after I was born. Was brought up down there, went to several schools, and lasted a couple of weeks in each. Then my family finally sent me up to that Jesuit school at Seton Hall. Incidentally, that's where I met Jack and Lionel Barrymore. When the three of us got together, we were out in a week... I was soon back in Texas. Postgraduate course. So I never graduated from college. Christ! I never even graduated from grammar school. I stayed on the family ranch, grew up on the ranch. Worked part of the time in Montana, then I went back to Texas and got a job with the government breaking horses: 'topping' horses. The government was out buying horses for the cavalry and the ranchers were supposed to run in horses that were broken. Every now and then they'd send in a bronc to sell. When the colonel overseeing the operation saw a horse that looked a little like an outlaw, we'd top it. I got twenty-five cents for topping a horse.

How long would that take you?

Until I was thrown off. Some of them were pretty wild, pretty wicked. Finally I busted my leg, but they patched me up and sent me to San Antonio for more medical treatment. While I was waiting around San Antonio, I was sitting one day on the porch of a cheap hotel where I was living when a fellow walked by—a city fellow, a dude. He said, 'You want a job, cowboy?' Then he told me to come to the local theatre at seven o'clock. So I hobbled down there, still wearing bandages on my legs. He noticed them: 'Hell, you've got to ride a horse. How can you ride a horse with that leg?' I said, 'Where is he?' I rode him and the guy hired me for thirty dollars a week. I had been making thirty dollars at the ranch, so I didn't get any raise. I hung around for an hour or so. After a bit they dressed me up in a white outfit, with a Ku Klux Klan hood, and I got on a horse. The horse was on a treadmill. I heard the fiddlers and those sons of bitches on the drums and the buglers blowing. Then they handed me a fiery cross. There I was with a bum leg and they pulled me and the horse across and the curtain came down. Afterwards I asked where the feller was who usually rode the horse. They said he was in the hospital... he landed in the orchestra pit.

Anyway, I worked with that show all the way to St. Louis, playing one-nighters here and there. The leading man, a fellow named Franklin Richey, said, 'How'd you like to be an actor?' I said I'd try anything once. He then got the assistant stage manager to give me the parts of several of the actors. Frank said I might have an opportunity to act whenever other actors got sick and couldn't go on. 'Just stand in the wings,' he said, 'and watch what they do. Sometimes they get drunk and can't go on. You'll get a chance before we're through.' Never got a bloody chance, though, all the way to St. Louis. Stood in the wings watching those

bums reciting, got on a horse and did my bit, and that was it. Then one of the character actors persuaded me to go to New York.

What year would this be?

About 1909, I guess. In New York I signed up with several agencies. I got a job with a stock company in Hoboken for one week. I had three lines—missed them twice. Anyway, the gist of all this is that the woman at one agency, noticing that I was from Texas, asked if I could ride a horse. I said yes, and she asked very apologetically if I'd consider going into motion pictures. I said, 'Not at all. Where are these pictures being made?' 'Over in Union Hill, New Jersey,' she says. In those days, you see, none of the Broadway actors had anything to do with pictures. They wouldn't go in them because the picture played in nickelodeons and honky-tonks, and they didn't want to lower themselves. She gave me a card to see the Pathé brothers, who were just starting then. Met the two brothers: I didn't understand any French and they didn't understand much English, but they had an interpreter. 'Can you ride the horse?' they asked. 'Yes, I can ride the horse.'

They took me to a livery stable and brought some nags out. I saddled one of the horses that looked pretty good and rode down to the brothers who were sitting on a porch. I got off. They said, 'All right.' Then I made a flying mount. Nobody back there knew what a flying mount was: that's when you leap into the saddle without touching the stirrups. So I dug my heels into the horse and took off. On the way back one of the brothers met me with a piece of paper and told me to sign it. 'You're an actor for Pathé Brothers.' I was a lousy actor, but I could sit on a horse.

Was there for about a month, I guess. We'd all go out into the New Jersey hills. I don't know how much riding I did. One day we took a helluva long trip to this large estate, with this blonde dame—I was playing the lead—and we got ready to play the scene. Then there was a big uproar because the cameraman forgot to bring the film. A whole day spent just riding up and back for nothing. Anyway, D. W. Griffith saw one of these 'masterpieces', asked me to see him, and when we met asked if I'd like to go to California. I made a deal with them and he took me to California in 1910.

Weren't you in some Biograph films in New York?

Yes, I played in some of them, with Mary Pickford. Mary, of course, later separated from Biograph before the time we all went to California. . . . Funny coincidence. Griffith's biggest and best picture was *Birth of a Nation*, which was based on the old show I had been in called *The Clansman*, the play the feller hired me in to ride across the stage. I brought that up to Mr. Griffith. 'You know, I was once in the stage version of this down in Texas.' 'Remarkable coincidence,' he said. 'I'm thinking of having you play John Wilkes Booth.' When he made it I did play Booth. I was a lousy actor, you know. Instead of Griffith shooting Lincoln, he should have shot me!

In the assassination scene you catch your spur on the flag, which is what apparently happened to Booth. How many times was that scene shot?

Did it once and it near broke my leg. It was sore for a long time. In those days an

actor had to do the stunt himself.

Which was your first picture for Griffith? Do you recall?

No . . . bunch of one-reelers. He'd give us a sheet of paper and tell us to get in the car with the boy and girl [hero and heroine] and the cameraman and see what we could get.

When did you first assist Griffith?

When we first went to California, about 1910 or 1911. I'm a bit hazy on the dates. If I was making one or two-reelers, then someone else would be the assistant. But if I was at liberty, then I'd help. Usually if he had any horse action, then I was the assistant. 'Mr. Walsh, would you kindly get



Raoul Walsh in the 1920s

those horsemen up here,' or 'Get that Indian off that horse.' I might say, 'He's all right. He can ride. He's just drunk. They're all drunk.' It was my job to round up the cowboys, who didn't have telephones. Griffith would say, 'Mr. Walsh, I need fifteen cowboys tomorrow morning at Newhall,' which is a good twenty-five miles from downtown Los Angeles. I'd have to go down to where the cowboys were sleeping and in saloons and such at two or three in the morning, and get them on their horses. We'd be up there in the morning when the old man got there.

Did you assist him on *Birth of a Nation*?

Yes, off and on. The battle scenes and different things.

Then you left to direct your first picture away from Griffith?

I left Griffith while he was in Chicago having trouble with the Negroes about *Birth of a Nation*. While he was there the Fox Company contacted me and made a pretty good offer. I went to Mr. [Frank] Woods, who was the studio manager, and told him about this. Woods said, 'Mr. Griffith told me to hold on to you, Wally Reid and Henry Walthall. But you'll make more money with Fox on that one picture than you'll make in a year here. But you go. The company will fold in a year.' 'Because of my picture?' I asked. 'No, but you know these fly-by-night companies . . .' But the picture clicked that I made for them. That was a picture called *Regeneration*, a gangster film with a fellow called Rockcliff Fellows and Anna Q. Nilsson. Fox used to own the

Academy of Music where pictures used to run only three days. This one ran for three weeks. After *Regeneration* Fox made me another lucrative offer and I stayed. I was with them I don't know how many years.

Could I backtrack for a moment to *Life of Villa* [1912]? You wrote the script for this, and you worked with Christy Cabanne on it and played Villa. Did you meet Villa himself?

Oh, sure. I was sent down there to Mexico to meet him and pay him off so we could make the picture. We photographed him and some battles and stuff. Funny thing, nobody can find a print of that film anywhere.

During those early years, did you consider yourself an actor first and a director second, or vice versa?

You did both, you know. If Griffith was making something and he wanted me or Gene Pallette or any of those fellows, he'd normally ask us to work with him. But as an actor I was a real ham, not any good. I didn't want any part of it, really; I wanted to get into directing.

Do you think you learned much from Griffith?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

In your pictures one notices extreme long shots that are reminiscent of similar shots in *Birth of a Nation*. . . . Even in your *Objective Burma* there's an extreme long shot of Flynn and company signalling with a mirror that might remind one of Griffith.

He liked to establish the locale and let the audience digest where the hell it was at, and then gradually he'd creep up on those thespians. Of course the bastards are standing there with their tongues out waiting for a close-up.

What did you think of Griffith personally?

I liked him. He was a very fine man, a very silent man, a sad man, a dreamer. For years and years he'd refer to me as 'Mr. Walsh': 'Mr. Walsh . . . Mr. Walsh. Mr. Crisp . . . Mr. Crisp.' He never called anyone by their first name, and you never called him anything except 'Mr. Griffith'. Every once in a while we'd relax and call him 'Chief', but never to his face.

What did you think of Billy Bitzer?

He was a great cameraman and a student. He was always . . . I can remember Billy in the early days, after a storm for instance, with his camera out photographing fogs. Or he would motor down to Santa Monica, when he wasn't on a picture, to try to get a sunset or something. He was always fooling around with things, putting gauzes on the camera to soften the focus.

How did you actually get the opportunity to direct? You were an assistant to Griffith, but did he just tell you to get behind a camera and start shooting?

Well, the studio manager, Mr. Woods . . . he kind of liked me because I was there early in the morning and I would stay till late at night, and was always around with Griffith. He called me and said they were going to give me a chance to direct. So and so of a picture, a nice, tight, little story. So he gave me a job. They were then making a five-reeler—I think it was an Ibsen play—and the director was on it for about a week. It was one of the first five-reelers Biograph ever made, but the director, poor devil, had hit the laughing water and he was thrown

out. Griffith asked me to take over directing Henry Walthall and the others. He had me come in to see him with the actors. I had rehearsed them, and he said, 'Very good,' or 'Change this a little,' or 'Do this here.' He was a great man.

Looking over your films of the 1930s, I noticed that you liked to work with Victor McLaglen. Was he a personal friend?

I gave him his big start, you know, in *What Price Glory*, and we became close friends after that. He had a naturalness that I liked. The actors we used for their faces and physiques in the early days were much better in pictures than actors who came from Broadway and gave you an overblown, stagey performance, yelling their lungs out because they were still talking to the gallery. In the days of the silents you could hear those bastards a mile away. 'OUT OF MY HOUSE!' one might say. I'd then say, 'Turn it down, we've neighbours asleep here . . .' [Pause, and Walsh laughs to himself]. One of them would ask, 'What is the procedure now, Mr. Walsh?' 'You come in, kick him in the ass, and then go out,' I'd answer. 'He doesn't believe in rehearsing, this man,' they'd say. 'He rushes you in and rushes you out.'

Which actors did you most enjoy working with?

Cagney, Bogart, Flynn, Cooper, Gable; the old ones such as Wally Beery and George Raft. Got along well with all of them. They were co-operative actors because we were on a tight schedule, maybe twenty-two days. The producers thought it was big-hearted to raise it to thirty-two. It wasn't easy to make a five-reeler in twenty-two days. Now they take twenty-two months, and they're all too expensive.

What about *Thief of Bagdad*? Wasn't that expensive for its time?

No, that wasn't. I don't think it reached a million. There was nothing over a million in the old days: two hundred thousand, five hundred thousand, never higher. Fairbanks had a good organisation. Two of his brothers ran it and they were a bit on the thrifty side. Good traders. Someone gave the impression that *Thief of Bagdad* cost two million, but it didn't.

What kind of storyline did you have for *Thief of Bagdad*?

Doug was a pretty good writer himself, you know. We would have meetings and he had a very valuable woman there, a Mrs. Woods, a former schoolteacher. We'd meet before we started the picture. Doug would say, 'Well, Irish, what do you think? Should I do it this way?' I'd get some wild idea and Doug would say, 'Jesus! That's good. Keep thinking, keep thinking.' Then Mrs. Woods would work on it and Doug and I would go and exercise or he'd start rehearsing the stunts he had to do. We used to run around a track, too. We were always exercising. And we got along well, Doug and I. It was a great departure for me, away from the rough stuff I'd been doing to this dreamy kind of epic.

In *What Price Glory* you introduce Dolores Del Rio with a shot of her behind. Eileen Bowser has said, 'This hind shot is



Top: Pauline Starke (right) in *'Lost and Found on a South Sea Island'* (1923). Centre: McLaglen, Edmund Lowe and Phyllis Haver in *'What Price Glory'* (1926). Right: George Walsh (the director's brother) in *'From Now On'* (1920).



'The Big Trail' (1930)

almost a Raoul Walsh trademark.' Is that true?

That's probably true. I don't know. In those days we'd take five or six sexy shots knowing that four of them had to go.

Did you always edit your films?

Oh, yes, yes.

What about in the 1940s?

By then the producers had become powerful, but the way I shot a picture allowed them to cut it only one way. They couldn't fool around with it.

What was your most successful picture?

Grossing? I guess *What Price Glory*. It grossed \$170,000 in one week, at sixty cents top admission. The crowd was so big in New York that for a while Fox had it running twenty-four hours a day. The sequel, *Cock-Eyed World*, was a hit, but the third one was a dog. I told them they shouldn't go to bat three times with a thing called *Women of All Nations* [1931], but they knew it all, so I said, 'It's your money, boys; it isn't going to go.' Those two fellers [Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe] were such a drawing card after *What Price Glory*, but then the public got a bit tired of them. The producers should have given them a rest from that story. *Cock-Eyed*

World [1929] was the first film in which McLaglen talked. He had a very broad English accent . . . 'All right, blighties, get out of my way here.' I hired a couple of gorillas to go round and correct him: 'Sit between these two bums and talk like they do.' During the shooting he learned to talk with more of an American accent, but at night he'd visit with his English pals, then the next day come on the set with his accent and we'd have to change it all over again.

How did you get in the line about 'the lay of the land'?

In that scene I had McLaglen call to El Brendel, I think it was, who is walking with this good-looking chick, 'Hey, where are you going?' Brendel says, 'Captain, I'm bringing you the lay of the land.' Brendel then reaches into his pocket and takes out a map: 'Here's a map that will tell you where the enemy is sleeping.' The censor thought that was all right. When it opened and Brendel says, 'I'm bringing you the lay of the land,' the laughter damn near blew the roof off the theatre.

What kind of scripts did you prefer working on?

Outdoor stuff, adventure, things that would keep the picture moving. I didn't

like indoor films. I never did a picture with guys in tuxedos or evening clothes.

Did you write many of your scripts?

We'd add things to a script, take things out, tinker with them. The writers would fill up with laughing water and write: 'There's a cat that appears in a doorway, and it slowly walks across . . .' There's nobody who can take a scene with a cat. It's one animal you can't work with. One time somebody insisted that a cat appear in a picture I made. I told the lady who owned the cat to put it in a doorway and then make it move across a room. The lights went up on the shot and that cat took off and hasn't been found yet. We'd always change scenes like that and impossible shots that would take two hours to get with all the technical problems involved. Some of those writers would fill up on the laughing water and write half a page on a shot in Grand Central Station. Well, you couldn't go down to Grand Central Station and line up for just half a page. If you had four or five pages, that was all right. So we'd cut it out and play it in front of an outhouse somewhere . . . See, we had to work so damned fast. You'd be working on a picture in June and it had to be in a theatre in September. It was pre-sold, and you got money from the exhibitors for the production, so you felt you really had to bear down on it. In the early days, I'd finish something at two in the morning and start a new one at eight the same morning.

What do you think was your best script?

I don't know. I like the old *What Price Glory*. I like *Thief of Bagdad*; it was a change of pace. But with all the one and two-reelers, all the pictures I made—over two hundred, you know—it's pretty hard to go back over them. They all differ so, and the silent script was a lot different from the talkies script. When talkies first came in, they brought a lot of people from Broadway and long speeches were written that half of those bums couldn't remember. You'd have to keep cutting them. Of course, in the beginning there was no outdoor sound. Everything had to be indoors.

With whom did you have most freedom as a director during the sound period?

I never really had trouble with anybody, because most of the actors I handled were professionals. We got along very well. Once in a while there would be a little thing about deleting some word, some dialogue. That was all it amounted to. That's why I fought shy of women, because they're so goddam picayune about scenes and things and that. 'I don't feel comfortable in this . . .' After they read the goddamn thing and you get into a scene, they'll say 'This stinks!' I'd think, 'Why didn't it stink when you first read and accepted it?'

What actresses did you like to work with?

I made a picture with Marion Davies and Bing Crosby. She was a great girl, she was terrific. Jane Russell was good; Ida Lupino was good. Lupino got a seven year contract out of a picture I made. Was it *They Drive By Night*? She's in a courtroom scene and goes crazy or something. After Jack Warner saw it he signed her up for seven years. I worked with Dietrich on *Manpower*. She was good, a little methodical. She knew a hell of a lot about lighting. She'd say, 'Raoul, do you mind if I ask the cameraman to put a baby spot there?' I'd say, 'Go



'Top of the world, ma. . .' James Cagney in 'White Heat' (1949)



Pola Negri in 'East of Suez' (1925)

ahead, Marlene, you know more about it than he does.' She'd say, 'Well, thank you, Raoul.' Then we'd spray those spots all around her. I got along great with her. Other people had trouble, but I never did. In the old days Pola Negri was a wild Hungarian. Theda Bara, she was all right to get along with.

Did making films ever become not fun for you?

Only when we'd go out on location and the clouds would come up. We had no lights in the early days. Gradually we started to get some lights, though, Kleig lights. Lots of times the actors got what we called Kleig eyes. Pretty tough: their eyes would be badly burned and they had to put castor oil in them for two or three days before they could see again. A lot of times we'd use reflectors and forget the lights. The sun would hit the reflectors and shoot the sun in.

Did it perhaps become less fun when the producers came in?

Yes, it became a big problem then—a big problem. Directors lost a certain control, and there were lots of arguments about scenes.

Which of your more recent films was easiest for you to make?

The outdoor Western was pretty easy. After you had made so many of them, you knew every location and where to go and how to handle the thing. Also, the riders you could get stuff out of. Exterior pictures were always tough on women, because when the sun hit them they'd start blinking and stuff, and you had to build canopies over them. Then half the time a wind storm comes up, and the canopy would end up in Cincinnati.

Did you strive for realism in your films? In *White Heat*, for instance, before Mayo and Cochran kiss, they spit out their gum. Did you introduce a touch like that?

Sometimes you had time—the clouds would come up or something would have to be changed on the set—and you'd start thinking about little pieces of business for the actors. But otherwise you had to go so damn fast you didn't stop for a gum-chewing scene. That's the difference between a stage director and the motion picture director. The stage director has got a month in which he can put all that stuff in. But on a picture sometimes you have so much trouble getting a cast that you can't do much with the script before you start. Sometimes you never saw a bloody actor until he was down there on the set at eight o'clock in the morning.

***White Heat* is one of my favourites among your post-war films...**

That's a big hit all over. I just got back from Japan. I'd go to a restaurant and the waiter would say 'White Heat! White Heat!' It played well there all the time. The Japanese love everything that ends tragically: they remember that last scene with Cagney and think it's one of the greatest of scenes. I made another picture, *Colorado Territory*, in which Joel McCrea and Virginia Mayo were killed at the end. That's a terrific hit in Japan. They play that and *White Heat* all the time. Every Saturday night the damn things are playing.

Your heroes, especially in gangster films, always seem to die at the end. You once said that one reason you were happy to have Bogart in *High Sierra* was that you could kill him off, but you didn't feel you could kill off George Raft.

He turned it down, you know, Raft. Warner told me. Warner always referred to actors as 'those bums', and he said, 'Raoul, this bum turned the script down. Why don't you talk to him?' So I went to George's house and had lunch with him. We talked it over, but George was adamant. He said, 'No, I don't want to die in the end.' I said, 'Georgie, you'll have to, the censors will demand it.' He said, 'To hell with the censors, then.' So I went back to Warner and said, 'Jack, no going. Talked to him for two or three hours. He doesn't want any part of it.' Warner says, 'Well, who the hell are we gonna get? Goddamn it, we gotta get going!' He hated to hold anything up. I said, 'Well, you've got a fellow under contract—Humphrey Bogart.' Warner said, 'Do you want to take a chance with him?' I said, 'Of course I will.' 'All right, go and see the bum.' I went over to Bogart and he read the script and called me up about midnight: 'Christ! This is good. When do we start?' So that was that.

Who are some of your favourite directors?

I like old Henry King, and John Ford.

Do you think you and Ford share some affinity?

Probably. We're both of Irish descent.

He came into the business pretty early. I was the first one in. Another fellow named Allan Dwan was also a good director. I think Allan came in the year after I did. And Charlie Chaplin and I were great pals in the early days. I remember when Charlie worked for Sennett for five bucks a day.

Were there any foreign film-makers you especially liked?

I liked Lubitsch. He and I were pretty good pals. He once said, 'Raoul, I would like to make vat you make: is box office. You make vat I make, sometimes box office, sometimes no box office.' Fritz Murnau, he was a good one. You see, when Lubitsch and Murnau first came over, they got in touch with me, and I sort of steered them about the different approaches to things. Gave them a pretty good schooling in how to handle themselves. They appreciated that, and we became good friends. Mike Curtiz and I knocked around in the same studio. Mike was a nice old guy.

One critic, Andrew Sarris, has said, 'The Walshian hero is less interested in the why or the how than in the what. He is always plunging into the unknown, and he is never too sure what he will find there.' Do you feel that's too precious a criticism, or that it's on the nail?

I guess it's so. Everyone has his own impression of things. Maybe the guy was drunk.

What do you see in your films that makes them Walshian?

Maybe the continuous action. That's probably it. You see, sometimes the stories are so trite, and you can't let the audience get ahead of you. 'Jeez, he's going to get shot.' So you carry them along to get them away from that thought.

Was there a single most satisfying moment in your career?

Having been in the business so damn long, that's hard to answer. My greatest disappointment was censorship, which until recently was very strict. I could remake some of the pictures I made way back: it would be great. All the stuff that was cut out.

'A Distant Trumpet'. Released in 1964, this was Raoul Walsh's last film



James Paul Gay

WHAT DO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO EXIST IN THE WORLD DO? THEY DIE



Give a class of young children some 8 mm. cameras, turn them loose and let them make movies. The Swedish Board of Education, which adopted this programme, was so proud of its idea that it commissioned a special 25-minute colour film called *School Photography* to publicise it. This is what it shows:

All the children attend a large meeting at which various proposals are brought up and discussed. A committee begins working on the script and jobs are assigned: cameraman, actors, technicians. After further discussion, the script is approved and shooting begins. Close-up: broken glass on teacher's desk. Medium shot: teacher perplexed, leaves the room to fetch the headmaster. Inserts: children looking worried. Title: 'Who Did It?' Full shot: headmaster stalks in, thunder written on his brow. More reaction shots: the tension builds. Moving shot: trail of broken glass leading to a closed cupboard which the headmaster opens. Close-up: headmaster breaking into a broad grin. Medium shot: a cat sitting amid broken glass in the cupboard. Full shot: everyone laughing. Title: 'The End'.

One can see why a board of education would be so delighted with this film. The preparation was careful and extensive: every child was told what to do, nothing was left to chance. The result of this audacious (and expensive) experiment need not be laboured: another variation on 'Run, Dick, run. See the ball.'—at 16 frames per second. Of course, this isn't really a film by children. It's a film showing what adults expect children to make. Since no alternatives are presented, it's not surprising that the children fulfil those expectations. That is precisely what makes such a film so interesting: in scope, form, content and technique it represents a perfect example, not of a child's film, but of the vast majority of films for children being made today.

It is by now universally accepted that the mass media, especially television, have become the major educative source for young children. In Sweden, a child's access to the mass media is determined as follows:

FILM: Most children see films at weekend matinées. A few feature films for children are produced in Sweden, and some, such as the *Pippi Longstocking* series, are tremendous money-makers. Most of the product is still imported, however, and Disney retains the lion's share. The cinémathèque in Stockholm shows an excellent selection of international films on Saturday afternoons, but these programmes rarely reach more than 150 children per week.

MAGAZINES: This is the area of least state control among the mass media in Sweden. The field is dominated by a few large publishing houses such as Bonniers and Wennerbergs. Pulp novels, comic books, love stories and super-agents abound.

RADIO: Sweden has three radio stations, all run by the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation (Sveriges Radio). These broadcast entertainment and news, as well as special school programmes prepared by the educational division of S.R. Sixty per cent of the shares of Sveriges Radio are owned by various popular movements and trade unions, 20 per cent by the press, and 20 per cent by other private business interests. The State has no direct financial stake in the Corporation, but it does appoint the Director General and 10 of the 20 board members. Aside from the three radio stations, S.R. runs two TV channels, an educational division (School-TV), a news bureau and a foreign service. There is no commercial advertising on either television or radio.

TELEVISION: Children's programmes on television come from the following sources: (1) The children's division of TV-1. (2) The children's division of TV-2. (3) The School-TV division, which operates independently of both channels and is financed from the budget of the Board of Education. (4) A separate government-funded educational facility, the Committee for Educational Television and Radio (TRU). This organisation produces its programmes independently at its own studios.

Resources

The four sources listed above account for virtually all structural information that reaches the child outside of the libraries and schools. Some of it, such as the programmes produced by School-TV, is designed specifically for use in the school as well. Of these four sources, by far the largest share, both in money allocated and time with the child, goes to television.

Other sources of media production for children are negligible. In 1971, the Swedish Film Institute co-produced a children's film called *Niklas and the Character*, but this was not part of any established production schedule. A state-appointed committee has been studying possible areas of new activity for the Film Institute, and some form of subsidy for children's film production is being considered. The problem is a difficult one, because the resources of the Film Institute are very limited, and there are many areas which need attention. The commercial film companies produce a few

entertainment films, usually based on books by well-known children's authors such as Astrid Lindgren, but very few educational films. Nearly all the short films available from the A-V Centres of the school system, for example, were either originally produced for television or else imported from foreign companies (Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Inc., the National Film Board of Canada) and dubbed into Swedish versions. Occasionally, a film intended primarily for an adult audience will also be deemed suitable for children: *The Apple War*, a very clever and highly successful comedy about the environment, is an example. But with very few exceptions, feature films in Sweden are forbidden to children under 15 (or, for certain films, 11), and the production of short films of any type, and especially those of interest to children, diminishes year by year.

When discussing available resources, therefore, one can safely limit oneself nearly exclusively to television production. Television in Sweden is financed by a licence fee paid quarterly by all viewers. At the moment, this amounts to \$43 annually (plus \$19.50 extra for colour). The annual resources allocated by television to educational programming can be broken down as follows:

1. TV-1: \$772,000 (1971)
2. TV-2: \$1,295,000 (1971)
3. SCHOOL-TV: \$3,947,000 (1970)
4. TRU: \$3,028,000 (1971).

The actual allocation for children's programming varies for each of the four production centres: TV-1 and TV-2 use nearly all of this money for varied programmes aimed at a range of children from pre-schoolers to teenagers; School-TV concentrates most of its production on the 12-15 year-old group. TRU works a great deal with adult education and at this point spends only \$80,000 of its budget on programmes for children (pre-schoolers), but this proportion is going to be sharply increased.

Adding these together, one arrives at a total budget of \$9,042,000 per year. This money is earmarked specifically for educational films and television shows, and it should be emphasised that all of it comes either from TV licences or tax monies, and is thus completely free of the commercial obligations that ordinary film production entails. Not a single programme produced with this money is expected to earn a profit, not a single programme is subject to the pressures of commercial sponsorship, and the degree of autonomy enjoyed by each of these divisions is exceptionally high by any international standard and something of which the Swedes are justly proud. Over \$9 million in annual public sponsorship for educational programmes in a country with a total population of only 8 million is extraordinarily high, and one waits expectantly for a spate of imaginative programmes that will flow from these abundant resources.

One waits in vain. The results of all this money and all this planning are with very few exceptions bitterly disappointing—text-book examples of how things went wrong.

The indifferent quality of most children's programmes is attested to by the fact that nearly all of them are broadcast just once or twice and then filed away in the vaults. The

goal of producing films for an international audience, which has characterised the Swedish cinema since the days of Sjöström and Stiller, does not extend to television, especially children's TV. While indifferent feature films tend to vary widely from country to country, bad children's programming has a certain sameness to it all over the world. The clichés are international, and certain recognisable patterns consistently recur:

1. The funny-little-man-who-tells-stories-to-children syndrome. Perhaps the best known programme of this type is the American *Captain Kangaroo*; in Sweden, he has been transformed into kindly old Mr. Barbalanda. No doubt viewers in other countries will recognise their own equivalents. The ingredients never vary: a young actor made up as an old man (it wouldn't do to have children see what a real old person, with wrinkles and a faltering gait, looks like), an idyllic country house far removed from any recognisable social environment (even a rural one), bright sunshine every day of the week, and a host of characters—preferably puppets, animals and paintings—that talk to the child and instruct him while everybody has fun together. The Swedish version has introduced one improvement: Barbalanda speaks with a Finnish accent. Finns are the largest group of foreign workers in Sweden, and the producers wanted to include a device which would lessen the isolation in which Finnish children in Sweden often live. It is a commendable innovation, but the basic premises are not changed.

2. The day-in-the-life syndrome. A child accompanies one of his parents to work, or goes out with an adult friend and learns a little of what people do when they've grown up and left school. There have been many marvellous programmes based on this theme, but unfortunately many more poor ones. One programme I saw was about a little girl who followed her mother into the city one day. The mother worked as a secretary, and spent over two hours a day commuting to and from her job: walking to a bus stop, taking a bus to the station, a train to the city, a subway to another bus stop, and finally another bus to her office. At work, one saw the little girl playing with her mother's typewriter, the co-workers and bosses playing with the little girl, a coffee break, a lunch break, and mother and daughter waving goodbye to everyone at the end of the day. The programme ends with them waving goodbye to the camera.

At no point is there any attempt to show what the mother really *does*, or what kind of work the men for whom the mother types letters and brews coffee are engaged in. Nor does anyone question why all the executives are men and all the secretaries women. The most basic issues pertaining to any kind of work—is it necessary, is it useful, could it be made more enjoyable—are never brought up. The child is never allowed to ask why it takes so long to get to work and why her mother has to use four separate means of transport (plus walking) ten times a week. A similar programme showed a little girl going with her father to his job. He is a carpenter on a building site, but neither the child nor the audience ever gets to see how he works, what his tools are, what other kinds of jobs exist at building sites, or anything else related to the real world.

Instead, the girl is given a ride on a freight elevator, and then packed off into a corner with some toys and a puzzle for the rest of the day.

3. The learning-isn't-really-so-painful syndrome. This type of programme begins from the premise that children possess only the most limited of intellects, and that if one absolutely must pollute their childhood with information, the least one can do is see that the process is sugar-coated. The rewards of learning are not knowledge and understanding, but rather the fun one can have with associated games. It is not difficult to see why this syndrome is so widespread: because of the way education is organised, learning and pain are synonymous to most people. Well-known actors or clowns are commonly used; they often work as a pair so that they can reassure each other at frequent intervals of how much fun they're having. The psychology behind these programmes can be illustrated as follows: I was watching a programme on the nature of light together with the show's producer. The programme was a paradigm of syndrome 3, and in addition it contained a number of factual inaccuracies (the sun was likened to a giant piece of burning coal; a laser was introduced as a 'strong light'). When I pointed these out, the reply was: 'I'm not expected to know these things. I'm a TV producer, not a scientist.'

4. The let's-create-a-world-of-our-own syndrome. In many ways this is the most interesting syndrome of all, because it can be seen in so many varieties, and because it produces both extremes of children's programmes—the best and the worst. The characters are as classic as in a Western: the sensitive, lonely child; the symbol of authority (usually a parent or teacher), who is often too self-absorbed to relate to the child; the hero's peers who exclude him (or her) from their group; and finally the person with whom the hero makes contact. Sometimes this is an adult (himself often an outsider in society); usually it is another child. The process by which the hero is excluded from his group can range from mild sarcasm or indifference to outright mobbing. One can see why this genre has attracted so many children all over the world, and why so many of the most talented children's authors have used it. These stories are often autobiographical, which explains part of their great charm.

The parallel with the Western can be drawn further: because the form is so tightly defined, and because it has such universal appeal, it has become open ground for both mediocrities and geniuses. At their best, the films and books of this genre transcend the boundaries of children's literature, uniting the world of child and adult. At their most common, both here and abroad, they simply wash over the screen in a flood of banality and bathos. At their worst, they can be transformed into pure exploitation: witness any of the Shirley Temple movies from the 1930s.

Outside of these syndromes, there are certain areas in which children's TV in Sweden excels. News programmes and documentaries from the regular programming schedule are often remade into children's programmes. Thus a child at last

has the opportunity to learn about subjects that are still too often taboo: life in an underdeveloped country, the war in Indochina, the secession of Bangladesh, environmental problems, etc. Every few months, some political or social group will become enraged by what it feels is the indoctrination of children, and there will be a great deal of publicity and debate in the press, but the threat to Sveriges Radio's autonomy is never serious. It is true that some of these programmes are of questionable objectivity, but since such incidents are considered inevitable, and since the alternative—censorship—is a much greater evil, the broadcasting council almost invariably dismisses the charges brought against them. This is not to say that the threat of censorship has been completely neutralised (the 'free theatre' groups who do political plays sometimes run into difficulties), but in general freedom of expression is reasonably well preserved.

Obviously, as in all industrialised nation-states, freedom of the press does not mean equal access to the means of information by all members of society any more than social welfare means equal access to the means of production. But it does mean that at least the traditional civil liberties are upheld. There have been no scandals here to compare with the American N.E.T.'s refusal to screen a documentary on I.F. Stone, or the French O.R.T.F.'s refusal to screen Marcel Ophüls' *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*.

Another area in which Sweden has been a clear leader is in making programmes of sexual instruction for children. Many programmes of varying types have been produced, and most of them are good: clear, straightforward, warm and frank. One rather charming film, called *Only A Cat*, shows the full life-cycle of a female cat. One sees not only how she conceives and gives birth to her litter, but also how she suckles them, feeds them, teaches them and plays with them. The film is intended for pre-schoolers. Sex education is one of the few areas in which Sweden considers her programmes good enough to export.

There have been a few instances of excellent programmes which superficially belong to one of the syndromes quoted above, but which manage to avoid the pitfalls. Sadly, they are rather isolated examples. One such programme is called *How One Builds A House*, and it is a gem of simplicity and cleverness. The producer (who was also his own cameraman, something very rare in Swedish television) went out to a building site where one of Stockholm's innumerable pre-fabricated apartment houses was being erected. He showed all the techniques that go into making such a building: assembly-line placement of components; pre-measured (and cardboard-thin) wall sections being fitted in less than a minute; whole walls, complete with windows, being lifted into place. The film ends with the building all finished, ready for occupancy—while a few yards away, a steam shovel is preparing the foundations for the next set of blocks. After the film was put into a rough cut, it was shown to a group of children the same age as its intended audience. They were encouraged to ask questions while the film was being run, and their questions, along with the answers given, were recorded. That's the

complete soundtrack. The film is bright, fast and honest. Total cost: \$400.

A completely different kind of programme is called *Night Creatures*. It is about the Spanish painter Joan Miró, and is a beautiful collage of sharply contrasting images: patterns of mosaic tiles, a city at night seen from the air, isolated parts of the human figure. These images are interspersed with shots of Miró's paintings, showing very clearly how extraordinarily life-like his 'abstract' paintings are. As befits a programme for children, many scenes were shot in a famous and still used playground in Barcelona where Miró grew up. The playground was designed by Antoni Gaudí i Cornet, and it is filled with fantasmical designs of mosaic and plaster. The beauty of Miró's paintings is not so very different from what one sees in this joyful playground.

A third programme, also in a class of its own, is called *Lotta and Per* and is about a brother and sister who do not get along with each other. The mother is a distant, nagging figure; the father is not seen. The programme uses animated figures over still photographs. The photos are made with a distorted perspective, expressing the frustration of both children in poignant visual relief.

It should be noted that of these three programmes, only *Lotta and Per*, by Birgitta Öhman, was made by a producer from the children's division. *How One Builds A House* was made by Bengt Dyme, who works with adult television, and *Night Creatures* is the work of theatre director Hans Dahlin. Neither of these two men has made any other programmes for children, or has any plans to do so again.

Who Cares?

An attitude one encounters frequently among the producers of children's programmes is that they are pioneers, working in an area which has been long neglected and which no one except them really takes very seriously. They feel that their divisions are under-budgeted, and that their work does not enjoy the prestige and influence of the other broadcast divisions. While at first glance this would seem to be belied by the \$9 million plus in annual resources, in a way they are right. Somehow, there just isn't enough money. This paradox can only be understood in the framework of the way television is organised. Perhaps a comparison with feature film production would be useful in this context.

When a film-maker in Sweden wishes to realise a project, he submits either a synopsis or a script, a list of actors and technicians with whom he wants to work, a shooting schedule and a budget estimate to the production company. All the people on the film itself will be hired on a freelance basis, the permanent administration of the production company being quite small. Even the Swedish Film Institute, which is state-controlled and which encompasses many areas besides film production, has a relatively modest permanent staff: salaries for the central administration amounted to approximately \$140,000 in 1971 out of a total budget of just over \$3 million.

This personal involvement in each project, and the closeness between studio and artist, has often provided an extraordinary degree of personal freedom for the director, while

minimising the division between the administrative, directorial, and technical sides of film-making. Indeed, Charles Magnusson, founder of Svensk Filmindustri, was also a cameraman, scriptwriter and director; Kenne Fant, its current president, started his career as an actor. This multiplicity of rôles, and the lack of a clear division of labour, were perhaps the most important factors in the early development of Swedish films—and one is continually struck by how exceptionally good these early movies are.

Perhaps an even more striking illustration of this sense of unity can be seen in an essay Bergman wrote in 1960. It is worth quoting at length: 'During the shooting of *The Virgin Spring*, we were up in the northern province of Dalarna in May and it was early in the morning, about half-past seven. The landscape there is rugged, and our company was working by a little lake in the forest. It was very cold, about 30 degrees, and from time to time a few snowflakes fell through the gray, rain-dimmed sky. The company was dressed in a strange variety of clothing—raincoats, oil slickers, Icelandic sweaters, leather jackets, old blankets, coachmen's coats, medieval robes. Our men had laid some ninety feet of rusty, buckling rail over the difficult terrain, to dolly the camera on. We were all helping with the equipment—actors, electricians, make-up men, script girl, sound crew—mainly to keep warm. Suddenly someone shouted and pointed towards the sky. Then we saw a crane floating high above the fir trees, and then another, and then several cranes, floating majestically in a circle above us. We all dropped what we were doing and ran to the top of a nearby hill to see the cranes better. We stood there for a long time, until they turned westward and disappeared over the forest. And suddenly I thought: this is what it means to make a movie in Sweden. This is what can happen, this is how we work together with our old equipment and little money, and this is how we can suddenly drop everything for the love of four cranes floating above the tree tops.'

What is of course important here is that Bergman didn't just 'drop everything'; the spontaneity and unity of the work was integral to the creative process. What is so delightful about this essay is its universality: Buster Keaton's reminiscences about his own film company are nearly identical.

This tradition does not extend to television, where the administrative structure is tight, rigid and top-heavy. The School-TV division at Sveriges Radio alone has 169 full-time employees. Of these, no more than a third work actively with production; the rest are administrators, accountants, secretaries, press officers, etc. Most of the costs in producing for television are used in simply keeping the whole structure afloat. While it is true that the educational division and TRU must produce part (but not all) of their programming on commission, the children's divisions of both channels are free to produce what they like. And yet the same pattern holds even there.

Even more distressing is the shortage of technical expertise. Among the producers, this is due primarily to an almost total lack of previous experience in film-making. Worst of all, technical sloppiness and bad production are excused on the grounds that the audience won't notice: after all, they're



Above: Swedish TV's 'Krumeluren' series. Below: Hasse Alfredsson in Lasse Forsberg's 'The Christmas Calendar'



just children, they can't tell the difference, it's only educational TV.

Nearly all the upper-level employees at both Sveriges Radio and TRU come from an academic background, and most worked as journalists, sociologists or teachers before beginning in television. While many are intelligent people with a sincere concern for children, the effect of this practice has been detrimental on at least three counts:

1. Producers often cannot cope with even the simpler technical questions. This results not only in a sharp division of labour within the production, but also in a high incidence of unpleasant surprises when the film comes back from the lab. The best producers have tried to learn about film-making on their own; the worst simply feel that this is not their responsibility and confine their 'direction' to reminders that the cameraman should be sure to zoom in on whoever happens to be talking.

2. Most television producers come from nearly identical social backgrounds. It is still the case in Sweden that the majority of academics come from the wealthier classes, and since academics are so heavily over-represented in television, the wide range of experiences and backgrounds that one often finds in theatre or film is replaced by a bland homogeneity and, even worse, by a disconcerting complacency. This is often hidden behind a veneer of the most disarming liberalism or even radicalism. But it is here that the more frightening aspects of the Swedish mass media manifest themselves, and the stagnation of what is euphemistically termed the 'cultural debate' becomes apparent.

Sweden, perhaps more than any other country, has succeeded in grafting what at first glance appears to be radical content on to the most reactionary of forms. Thus school courses on imperialism, black history, or Marxist economic analysis are taught within

the framework of a monolithic and inflexible educational system; television programmes explaining digestion or the decline of the railways are made using the pedagogy of the Victorian nursery and a technique made obsolete by Edwin S. Porter; films documenting the history of the working-class movement are thoroughly engulfed in a morass of the most bourgeois sentimentality. In short, this radicalism—a 'radicalism' carefully pre-packaged so that it will appeal to a large mass of the population—invariably becomes an apologia for the status quo. The problems presented are very real and very important; the form in which they are presented precludes any action except through already existing channels and institutions. This is a step quite beyond what American liberals term the co-option of radical dissent. This is instead the castration of radicalism—indeed, even of social mobility—through its pre-emption by an invisible elite.

3. Very few programmes, even the non-commissioned ones, are the conception of a single person, and the fragmentation that occurs between conception and reality is nearly comic. The degree of individual autonomy that had been one of the chief joys of film-making in Sweden has been sharply curtailed, not only because of all the superfluous bureaucrats, but also because of a spurious kind of democracy which demands that every idea must be discussed to death in committee before a camera can be loaded. Indeed, this autonomy would be nearly impossible to attain even if it were wanted simply because so few producers have the competence to carry it out.

All these characteristics can be seen in two series which TRU produced called *Small People* and *About*. The basic idea is a good one: to produce a series of parallel films about young children which show them as people in their own right. *Small People* would be shown in the evenings and aimed at parents; *About* during the morning for the children. The series deals with questions whose range includes dental care, single parents, child-abuse, and the developing ego. The finished product, unfortunately, illustrates a great deal about the Peter Principle and precious little about children. The degree of insight that the producers achieved about small people can be illustrated by a scene in which parental love and tenderness are shown by having a father whirl his young child around to the music of a pop tune. The scene was shot from a low angle and backlit, so that the sun periodically strikes the camera lens. The expenditures lavished on this series are nearly beyond belief: the first four half-hour programmes (in black-and-white) cost \$32,000. When programmes are aired during prime time, they reach 3.9 per cent of the population. The help they offer the viewer is questionable: a child psychologist with whom I talked commented that they tended to put parents on the defensive, thus hindering the very situation they were designed to help.

Of course, a figure of 3.9 per cent audience rating leaves TRU rather vulnerable to criticism, and they have devised a defence of admirable ingenuity. They have hired a firm of scientific pollsters to test audience reaction in the most punctilious detail. Thus, for example, a study of the eye movements of a sample group of 5-year-olds indicates



'The Christmas Calendar': Claire Wikholm, Carl-Gustav Lindstedt

that between the 11th and 18th minute of a given programme, a certain percentage were watching the screen, some rested their eyes elsewhere, a few were wandering around, and others had left the room.

TRU has become something of a national joke in Sweden, but it is an expensive joke and beginning to wear a little thin. Much more important than the institution itself, however, is the principle it illustrates: how to achieve less for more, how to muffle creativity, how to alienate an audience. TRU and Sveriges Radio are important precisely because they are so typical of television facilities all over the world. The one unifying attribute of television today, commercial or non-commercial, is its centralisation, its rigid division of labour, and its increasing monopolisation of enormous financial and human resources. It is not enough to liberate television from advertisers: it must also be liberated from itself.

This state of affairs is particularly unfortunate because in fact Sweden is full of gifted and imaginative people who work with children. One is constantly surprised by the variety and scope of the ideas. Nearly every theatre, from the Royal Dramatic to the small troupes who give performances in the cellars of the Old Town, puts on children's performances, and these are often full of wit and spirit. The Stockholm Marionette Theatre has become world famous through its combined repertory of children's plays and avant-garde works. Very often, a group of young actors and directors will write and perform a children's play, simply because they haven't the money to do anything else. Not a few of Sweden's best groups started off just this way, and their work can be a delight. There is even a group that produces musicals for deaf children: they rebuilt their instruments with large resonating chambers so that the children could feel the vibrations. The Stockholm municipal theatre has been playing (to full houses) a sketch called *Bellman, Bloom, Baby and the Broad*. The actors went out into the schools and asked

children what they most feared—and were afraid to talk about. The sketches were then built upon the answers given by the children. The result is not only a very healthy example of children's theatre, but also a well-seasoned parody on Sweden, Inc.

And what of excellence elsewhere? Programming policy is shown as much by what is not broadcast as what is, and among the more conspicuous absentees is *Sesame Street*. Officially, the reason *Sesame Street* has not yet been broadcast in Sweden is that it takes a great deal of time to adapt the programme to the Swedish environment, and that it has not yet been determined whether it would be more effective to produce a Swedish version alone, or a common Scandinavian edition in cooperation with other Nordic countries. In fact, however, *Sesame Street* has raised a number of sensitive hackles in the educational and broadcasting establishments, and serious objections have been levelled against not only the programme itself, but also the objectives underlying its inception:

1. *Sesame Street* is based on an assumption of familiarity with television advertising ('This programme has been brought to you by the letter G and the number 7'), and its introduction on to non-commercial Swedish TV would indoctrinate a generation of school children to accept TV advertising as natural and right.

2. The programme is imbued with American middle-class values and ideals.

3. It assumes that pre-school children can learn to read, that they want to learn to read, and that reading is good for them. All three ideas are viewed with deep suspicion by a large number of educators in Sweden.

4. The pace is much too fast for pre-schoolers. Even if they could grasp intellectually what is being presented—and a study of American viewers indicates that they can—the fast cuts, slick animation and excited rhythm will create anxiety and a state of psychological ill-being.

It would take a fertile imagination indeed

to see how viewing *Sesame Street* could create the desire to watch television commercials. One can attack *Sesame Street* for its middle-class values, but then in fairness one would be forced to abandon the entire concept of educational television altogether. And naturally, the strictures against the American origin of *Sesame Street* have not prevented Sveriges Radio (or TV stations all over the world) from importing an endless stream of American situation comedies and melodramas.

Of course, a generation of 3-year-old readers will create grave problems. These problems, however, will be experienced not by the children, but by adults. They will be felt by school-teachers who will have to defend their monotonous and increasingly irrelevant curricula, by TV producers who will have to explain away the pabulum they now churn out, and finally by the caste of academics who even now are frightened by their own unmarketability and to whom a generation of highly literate and conscious self-educated children represents an unthinkable threat. It may not be possible to inoculate children against our new world consumer society, but the least we can do is see to it that they become conscious, critical consumers who are aware of the price.

The Wave of the Future

The TV executives are becoming sensitive to the increasing criticism directed against many programmes. One of the remedies they have taken is to hire feature-film directors to make children's series for TV. This process has been somewhat symbiotic: because of the current film crisis in Sweden, many directors have been unable to continue with their ordinary film work and have begun working for television instead. Some are genuinely interested in making children's films; others simply had no alternative. But in any case, a certain new pattern of large-scale production is emerging. Each of the two TV channels is investing quite large sums in the production of one or two major series each year. It is hoped that these series can be sold to foreign networks, thus recouping the extra production costs. The results are interesting and widely varied.

By far the best of these new series is *The Christmas Calendar*, which was broadcast by TV-2 from Advent until Christmas Day, 1971. It was written by Göran Tunström, features two well-known actors, Carl-Gustav Lindstedt and Claire Wikholm, and is a surrealistic adventure of a family wandering through the perils of modern life. The wife is very visibly pregnant (she gives birth on Christmas Day), and the parallel to Joseph and Mary is evident, although not forced. Lindstedt has a great talent for subdued comedy, and he creates the kind of character that is immediately likeable. The children who appear in the series (John King and Åsa Österman) are a rare example of natural and unforced acting; most child actors have their grins and cuteness assigned to them by the props dept. The series was directed by Lasse Forsberg, who became well known a few years ago when his first feature *The Assault* aroused a fierce debate in the press. It is a long way from the gray and bitter grimness of *The Assault* to the pastel *Christmas Calendar*, but one sees the same talented hand behind both works.

Distressingly symptomatic of the worst

aspects of syndrome 4 are two series produced by TV-1. *The Secret Island*, directed by Jan Halldoff, is a *Lord of the Flies*-type story about a group of marooned teenagers, and *Julia and the Night Father*, directed by Stellan Olsson, is an exploitative piece of fantasy fulfilment about a girl's adventures with her handsome young babysitter. It is interesting that these two television series are much worse than any of either Halldoff's or Olsson's features.

It would be impossible to leave a discussion of children's film in Sweden without taking special note of Kjell Grede, whose first feature *Hugo and Josefin* is perhaps the best children's film ever made. Grede is an intently serious director, whose work is not at all restricted to the genre of children's films; he has since made two more features, *Harry Munter* and *Klara Lust*. Grede's films are quintessentially Swedish, and his choice of imagery and lighting convey a deep sense of lost communion. The heroes are intellectuals at the same time as they are innocents; the gentlest and yet most serious of revolutionaries. One critic dubbed *Harry Munter* 'Prince Myshkin in the suburbs'. Grede has the ability to quote a Mayakovsky poem so that it sounds like a love sonnet—which to Grede, no doubt, it is.

A more thorough discussion of Grede's work cannot be given here. It can only be emphasised that his contribution to the sadly limited store of outstanding children's films is quite unique. Grede once described *Hugo and Josefin* as 'a summer vacation with two children and a camera'; and the film has moments (such as when Hugo steals an old

high-wheeler bicycle from an abandoned factory and goes racing out into the sunlight) of dazzling lyricism. Although no longer working with children's films, Grede has retained an active interest in all aspects of education. He posed a single question which perhaps sums up the whole dilemma: 'We begin with a group of bright, lively, insatiably curious and life-hungry six-year-olds. We then expend vast amounts of time, energy and money in the process of educating them. Ten years later, most of them emerge from the machine which we have constructed with so much care as frustrated, unhappy and neurotic adults. What are we doing?'

What are we doing indeed? A partial answer is perhaps given by children themselves in a list of 900 questions. This list grew out of a very simple, but to my mind brilliant, idea by a group of producers at TV-2. While organising their new programme schedule, they went out into kindergartens and schools and asked children between the ages of 3 and 13 one thing: 'What do you want to know?' The answer, not surprisingly, was 'everything'. What is surprising is the range and subtlety of the questions. To quote a few from the 3-5-year-old group: 'Why does one run a fever?' 'Why do we have courts of law?' 'How does a prison look from the inside?' 'Why do women wear make-up?' 'Who decides that there will be a war?' Plus of course endless 'How does one make' questions. How does one make glass? Pens? Airplanes? Ice-cream? Lightbulbs? Among the slightly older children, one notices some more personally oriented questions as well. Some of these are masterpieces of understatement

and wit: 'Why do I draw so well?' 'Why do I think everyone is so stupid?' One 4-year-old, with perhaps more prescience than most, asked the question (and gave the answer) quoted as the title of this article.

Quite clearly, it is not necessary for either schools or mass media to 'awaken interest' in children: that interest is already there, bursting at its constraints. What is necessary is to create an open communications net whose purpose is not only to answer questions, but also to enable children to structure their own education according to their own needs. Broadcast television, while by no means the perfect instrument for this purpose, could at least build a foundation by opening its facilities to the widest possible range of artists, scientists, workers, farmers—in short, to anyone who enjoys talking to children and who feels he has something of value to say. It need hardly be added that children themselves should be included in this group.

Television still pretends to see its function as 'awakening interest' because it is still used by society for the basically destructive purpose of baby-sitting and tranquillising. This self-imposed limitation of television's potential has enabled it to continue as the private domain of an isolated caste of professional educators, producers, psychologists and bureaucrats. The result has been to dull the very faculties of creativity and exploration it was intended to develop. The resources expended on children's film and television have been vast. And yet in no other area is the audience so underestimated, the opportunities so misused, or the potential so blindly wasted. ■

Kjell Grede's *Hugo and Josefin*: Fredrik Becklén as Hugo



They were shooting John Huston's *The Mackintosh Man*. The scene was a fight in the exercise yard of a prison, started up to cover a jail break by Paul Newman. The yard was an oppressive vista in the huge set that had been built at Pinewood, something of a masterpiece of the studio plasterers' craft. The jail buildings were thirty feet high; the outer walls some seventeen; and they looked as solid and mature as Pentonville. Everything was a merciless grey. The prisoners' uniforms were grey also, and their shoes had been carefully greyed with simulated mud. Even the leaden October sky above and beyond the vista of the yard seemed blue and brilliant by comparison.

The bleakness was pervading. The assistant director, who seemed totally in charge of the scene, was rehearsing maybe a hundred extras and stuntmen through a loud-hailer: 'Miserable now. Miserable. . . No smiling during the fight. . .' Ossie Morris, the lighting cameraman, anxious-looking at the best of times, was balefully eyeing a break in the clouds where the sun threatened to come through and spoil his lighting. John Foreman, the producer, sat by, a man evidently oppressed.

Huston, however, was undoubtedly having fun. He looked like a stage Irishman, though it was hard to say whether a flamboyant poacher or a disreputable landowner. He was wearing a crumpled ginger suit and russet shoes, a coarse grey overcoat with a cape and brown velvet collar, and a kind of tweedy deerstalker. He smoked a cigar. Sometimes in full face the deerstalker made him look like a First World War *poilu*. Talking with the crew he changed again, and was more like a genial priest-confessor, too gentle even to pretend to these infants that their naughtiness was sin.

He roamed about contentedly, and every time the assistant said 'Turn over' he gazed with the rapt curiosity of someone just come in off the street. Sometimes he would murmur 'Cut' himself, but so quietly that no one heard him but the assistant. He explained that the assistant was handling the sequence by himself. 'He told me his ideas for this scene, which involves a lot of people. I let him stage it entirely; then I come in. He worked all day yesterday and part of the day before. I play the role of innocent bystander. Until the last moment; then I make corrections. But the staging of this is largely due to him. I make not very significant suggestions.'

Beside the camera stood a large board, with a very precise camera plan for the scene, and a detailed story-board of drawings for every set-up. Did this indicate that his role as innocent bystander was earned by very detailed advance planning and preparation? 'Not at all. No. This was done by the people who staged the scene and then sent to me for approval. Just for this one scene. For my first picture I did that, made my own drawings from set-up to set-up. But that was because I didn't want to appear too uncertain on the set for my first picture. And about half the time, without directing them, why, the actors fell into those positions by themselves. And about a quarter of the time they had something better.'

For the last couple of takes, and for the succeeding shot where smoke bombs were thrown in to heighten the confusion, Huston leapt on to the camera platform (he was using two Panavision cameras for the scene, one fixed and one mobile). Then he resumed his role as looker-on; and talked meanwhile about his old films. 'I am particularly set on *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, and it's only now beginning to become

appreciated. More and more people like yourself mention *Reflections in a Golden Eye* as one of my better films. And I quite agree. This is not a new experience. A number of pictures which I've made were not particularly popular at the time and later achieved considerable popularity. Designated as classics, whatever that means. *Red Badge of Courage*. It had no success whatever, critical or otherwise. Yes, it was received very well critically in England, but not in the United States. And I think *Reflections* will take its place eventually. *We Were Strangers* I haven't seen for a long time. I don't think I've seen it since I made it. I remember it. Of course I always think when I work on a picture that it's the best thing I ever did. *We Were Strangers* was based on a true incident. A lot of it was shot in Cuba. I liked Jennifer Jones in it, and John Garfield. It was a good cast; and there were good moments in it. Whether it was overall a good film I'm not sure; but I remember some excellent moments.'

He recalled films he did not like with the same sort of objectivity. 'There are some so bad that it would pain me a little bit to think about them. I wasn't responsible for a couple of them being as bad as they are. And for one I was entirely responsible. I regret that failure as much as any sin I've committed in my time. That was *The Roots of Heaven*, which could have been a very fine film. And largely owing to me was not a good film at all. The ones which were very bad films were in fact at one time good films, and nothing has been made of what happened to them as it was in the case of *Red Badge of Courage*. But they were ruined by their producers—in both cases I was away working on other films. One picture that is ghastly to look at today—and even when I first saw it I wanted to take

THE INNOCENT BYSTANDER

David Robinson



'The Mackintosh Man': John Huston on location in the East End

my name off right away—was *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (an awful title, by the way); and another picture that was very good, and spoiled beyond recognition, was *Sinful Davy*. I recommend you staying away from all three of those.'

'*The Bible*... It was an interesting one, very interesting. Unfortunately called *The Bible*. The title might have been a little more modest. Aside from the great falsehood, in so far as it was only half the Book of Genesis...'

For his latest picture, *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*, he was full of enthusiasm: 'It was a joy to make. Altogether. I had a wonderful time. We had a marvellous time on the desert near Tucson. I lived in a trailer and the whole thing was done on this one location. It's a big picture. I don't mean just physically. It has a big spirit. The wind blows through it. Adown the corridors of time.'

The great veteran Hollywood editor, Margaret Booth, was credited as supervising editor on the film before that, *Fat City*, although twenty years earlier she had appeared as one of the baddies in Lillian Ross' book *Picture*, about the making of *Red Badge of Courage*. 'No, not at all. She was not a villain. I'll tell you a little bit about that. There was a complete rejection for *Red Badge* on the part of the audience. It was the worst preview I've ever attended: they left the theatre in droves. I've speculated on why that was. Maybe the country was in the same state of mind as it is now over the Vietnam war: it was the Korean war then. And I remember myself turning fast through the pages of *Life* magazine. And this film—though it was set back in Civil War times—was... the photographs were made with an idea of the reality of war, of combat...'

'So there was an attempt—I think it was a mistaken attempt—to save something. There was one scene, if you know the book, where the Tall Soldier, the Tattered Soldier, dies; and it was probably the best scene in the picture; and it was the scene that most people walked out of. So that was cut, and a few other things were cut. Maggie was acting on instructions, and the instructions were not all that severe. It was an attempt... it was one of the few times when cuts were made to a picture of mine that I could understand; and even be sympathetic about. I don't think anyone could have protested too much. It was under the pressure of public reaction. And it's very interesting, two or three months ago I had a request from MGM: did I by any chance have an original print, because they would like to put it out again as it was originally made...'

The script of *The Mackintosh Man* was still not finished, two weeks into shooting. It is by Walter Hill, and based on a novel by Desmond Bagley, *The Freedom Trap*. Everyone was reticent about the qualities of the original book. 'Every now and then a good novel is at least as good, sometimes better, as a film. Now and then an awful thing occurs, as witness such a picture as that one I mentioned, that I did such a bad job on. That was a very interesting novel. But novels that are something less than first class have often been made into excellent films.'

For a shot which was to show in detail the start of the fight, Huston stepped behind the camera himself. He lowered his great height to the viewfinder, removed his cigar to

relish a lengthy smoker's cough, and gazed for a long time through the instrument, before giving Oswald Morris instructions for the meticulous placing of the extras in the frame. The crew were slightly foxed by his placing of two figures in the foreground, talking together but back to back. 'Shall I put another figure here?' asked the assistant. 'Won't it look funny if they're talking and facing away from each other?' 'No,' said Huston gently. 'No. This man can look back over his shoulder.'

'It's not often I look through the camera. I know what lens they're using, and I know what it's going to look like... I direct actors about as little as possible. The better an actor, the less I have to direct. I want to get as much out of the actor himself as I can. Because wonderful accidents occur. I guide an actor rather than direct; expand a performance or reduce it. So far as the mechanical element goes—why, that's just being a traffic cop.'

'I choose an actor as a rule for his... no, not as a rule, but *always*... for his *kinship* to the role. I cast personalities rather than actors. Then if they're superior actors, why that's so much velvet. But the trick is also in the casting, your assistant director, and all the people round you. I look for them to be very, very good. And try to reduce my own role to its minimum function...'

'But actors. I've had a long acquaintance with actors because my father was one. Each one is different of course, and their reactions are not so given and sure as with a good animal, for instance. People always say that more time has been spent working with animals and children. I think quite the opposite is true. With any understanding, you know pretty well what an animal is going to do and by the same token what a child is going to do. Actors are a step or two removed from that simplicity and innocence.'

(Huston had just previously broken off his innocent bystander to audition a beautiful, hopeless animal who had been brought to read for the part of a guard dog. Huston had sat on a pile of boards and watched with intense interest and patience and kindness as the dog had muffed all his chances, grinning, sniffing and leaping about in foolish gaiety when he was supposed to be attacking with intent to kill.)

'Each man that you work with is different. Some actors like to talk about what they're going to do, and I've discovered over the years it's not really to get information, or your opinion, but just to talk their way into it. Others do almost no talking. On *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, I don't suppose I addressed myself to Brando more than half a dozen times during the making of the picture. Just stood back and watched this phenomenon.'

'Now Paul Newman is full of innovation. He has wonderful immediate ideas. Very often supplements mine, or has something better than my notions. Some action, perhaps. The very best actors, the ones that fill me with admiration, are those that furnish *surprises*. You don't know—I doubt that they do either—where it comes from. They reach down into some remote cavern and come up with something that reveals a principle, something mysterious and new.'

'I don't distinguish between actors and anyone else. Just because they're professional, it doesn't make them actors. Some of

the best performances in *Fat City* come from non-actors. The trainer in that film is a director. Art Aragon was only a fighter, never acted in his life. The black boy, an extraordinary talent, a 17-year-old high school kid with whom they were having trouble in school. My God—this is a young black Brando! And the black man that as he hoes talks of wine and roses never acted. We gave him his lines and let him read—and they were his own.'

'There are fine black actors in the States now. Until this last experience, I had not been back there for a long time. And what surprised and delighted me most was the emergence of the black man. They are making greater progress than the whites of my acquaintance! I had seen a lot of them for the part of the girl's man friend; and they were all good. All very good, but a certain quality was not there. I was at the fights one night, at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. And a man came in with the right face; and he was quickly in the centre of a little group. They told me it was Curtis Cokes, the welter-weight champion. I went over and spoke to him, and said, were you ever interested at all to be an actor for five minutes? When I went away he said, "Who's that? What's that guy want?" Thought I was some kind of a drifter. Then he came back to San Francisco in a week or so for a fight; and I gave him a script. He lost the fight; and read the script that night to me. And he was just perfect. There's something in that face, a melancholy and a worldliness and a cadence in his voice...'

The scene had moved on to a shot with Paul Newman, who was to move away from the crowd, under cover of the smoke bombs, to wait for his rescuers under the prison wall. (There had been an idea for a motorcycle assault on the 17-foot walls; but the stunt-riders were having second thoughts.) Huston watched, as happily curious about it all as ever; then went over and murmured a couple of words to Paul Newman. He watched the next take appreciatively. 'Just now—this is when you're really in touch with an actor—I saw the way that was done, and I said, "Paul, try to be the invisible man when you come over." That's all. That's all you have to tell him. He is really extraordinary.'

After a couple more takes he said, 'O.K. That will do.' But the cameraman wanted another. He shook on the track, and did it again. Huston watched with the same abstracted interest. Then just at the end called out, 'Paul, Paul! Look this way.' Newman was thrown, puzzled; then looked interrogation at the director. 'That's it. That's just the way I wanted you to do it,' said Huston, and shook with merry laughter.



When *England Made Me* appeared seemingly out of nowhere at Edinburgh last August, its cast and director British, its producer an American lawyer and theatrical impresario, and its locations and crew Yugoslavian, we expected one of those uncomfortable hybrids that could quickly be lost and forgotten. We were wrong: *England Made Me* proves coolly to have no doubts about its own identity. The film, which has now been acquired by Hemdale for British distribution, demands attention not just because it comes from one of the few Graham Greene novels not already filmed, nor because it's spectacularly well photographed by Ray Parslow, whose apprenticeship was served under such as Renoir and Antonioni, but because it marks the arrival of Peter Duffell, who has made his way purposefully through the thicket of television, Edgar Wallace second features, commercials, and one highly respectable horror film (*The House That Dripped Blood*), in order to work wonders with what he describes as 'the only project that has really meant anything to me.'

So much of Greene's work has been translated into cinema that one wonders how *England Made Me* (his fourth novel, written in 1935) has been overlooked for so long. Part of the answer, it seems, is that Greene was well aware of what can remain when film companies have ploughed their indifferent ways across a novelist's landscape, and he guarded the film rights with the intention of constructing any screenplay himself. His caution is understandable: with its shifting viewpoints and unexpected flashbacks, the novel is delicately phrased. It has an undercurrent of personal fervour, and its allusions to the British educational system are so ironic as to suggest autobiography from the very title onwards. Written in 'the middle years for my generation, clouded by the depression in England (which casts a shadow on this book) and by the rise of Hitler,' the novel still flows in a disturbingly contemporary manner, as if the Empire could even now be glimpsed disintegrating with a monstrous grandeur into the sea.

The story contrasts the two sides of what could almost be a single schizophrenic personality—Tony Farrant, a charming wastrel whose career has been an international trail of jobs abruptly terminated, and his twin sister Kate, who has worked her way tenaciously to become the power behind the most influential organisation in the country. As if in parody of these complementary halves, there are two further opposites: Krogh the financier, and Minty, the tattered journalist scraping a lugubrious living from what facts he can glean about Krogh's activities. Although the qualities of all four—stubbornness, deviousness, weakness and helplessness—turn out to be interchangeable, it's Minty who steals the show, a nicotine-stained Pandarus commenting on the shadowy political drama proceeding under his wistful nose.

Greene didn't after all write the screenplay himself, but it's difficult to find a point at which Peter Duffell's film would have conflicted with the author's version. Whole sections of Greene's dialogue have been preserved intact, and where small pleasures like Minty's encounter with his editor have been lost, there have been compensatory



Michael York, Hildegard Neil

ENGLAND MADE ME



Peter Finch. Below: Hildegard Neil, York



Below: Krogh and his lieutenant (Joss Ackland)



Below: Peter Duffell with Michael York



gains. Duffell and his collaborator Desmond Cory have shifted the location from Sweden to Germany, externalising but not exaggerating the reasons for Krogh's growing desperation, and providing with just the briefest glimpses of early Nazi activity the sense of imminent disaster that makes an essential parallel to the unstable relationship of the Farrant twins.

The film's master-stroke, however, is to draw out Eliot's *The Waste Land* from Greene's own adolescence and substitute it for the novel's Shakespeare/classical references. Gower gives way to the detached and omnifunctional Tiresias, Liz Davidge loses her virginity not in Coventry but Richmond ('I raised my knees/Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe'), and an extraordinary series of other echoes resounds through the narrative (what better description of Tony, for example, than Eliot's 'One of the low on whom assurance sits/As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire'?).

What makes *England Made Me* remarkable, however, is Duffell's achievement. Working on a tiny budget with an eight-week shooting schedule, he has succeeded in making an elegant, careful and unhurried production. The rhythm of the film, despite a few nervous trims which seem to have crept in since its Edinburgh screening, is superbly judged; no more than two long-shots and one close tracking-shot are devoted to what looks like an elaborate transformation of the Opatija beach into a French seaside resort of the 1930s; a Nazi parade stamps briskly by to make hardly a pause in Tony's pursuit of his new conquest; while what could have been a self-indulgent sequence as the Farrants row blissfully across Lake Bled is kept sternly short, chilled by the sound of a Hitler broadcast rasping through the mountain air. The whole sequence of the Krogh visit to the local Nazi headquarters is magnificently done: the shots through the windscreen of a bleak Cocteauesque road unfurling towards oblivion, the lonely figures of Krogh and his henchman pacing away from the shining limousine, the brief glimpse of a roadside camp with a watchtower and barbed-wire fence. On the brink of an abyss, the two men clutch each other for comfort and support.

'In Rangoon,' says Tony nervously after trying to help a woman who has been beaten up, 'there's a place where you push a stick into the ground and out come loads of insects.' The image lurks inside *England Made Me* like Minty's spider, captive under a glass. Nudged with a stick, the businessman retaliates with swindle and, if need be, murder. Nudged by emergency, brother and sister fight, embrace, and part forever. Nudged by money, the journalist abandons principle, settles for silence, seeing the wasteland but knowing it can't be altered. Duffell brings them to life with the help of a faultless cast—Michael York managing to ring effective changes on his *Cabaret* performance, Peter Finch as the uneasy financier, Joss Ackland as his devoted supporter, and Michael Hordern having a whale of a time as Minty. Peter Duffell seems to have emerged from the years of television plays and commercials to cap one good film with one memorable one. Greene should be the making of him.

Philip Strick

IN THE PICTURE



Looking Back

'It's a potential social menace of the first magnitude,' said Lord Reith, eyebrows askance, to Malcolm Muggeridge, sagely nodding assent. They were talking about television, a medium distrusted by Reith, perhaps because by its nature it demolished the valve-stoppered dignity of the Reithian concept of public broadcasting. The old and trusted Knoxian *gravitas* of a dinner-jacketed Broadcasting House was knocked about a bit by the brash electronic hijinks of Alexandra Palace. Amazing to realise that television, as a national phenomenon at least, has been with us for only two decades. Now of course it's part of the furniture, and only a social menace to Muggeridge and co.

Television reaches its age of maturity as the BBC celebrates its jubilee. While the party guests have been properly respectful ('It would be hard indeed to find any other 50-year-old institution to which we owe as much,' wrote Barbara Wootton in *The Listener*), on the air the Corporation's own contribution to its birthday honours has been notably frivolous. Someone up there evidently decided that a fiftieth birthday is a time to remember, and we've been bombarded with nightly nostalgia in the shape of quiz games ('Yes, that was Sir John Betjeman at St. Pancras station') and jokey reminiscences of mishaps at the microphone. As clutches of BBC men have gathered to celebrate the product, the consumers have been left to thank Reith and the programmers for the good times they've given us. 'Television,' said a face on the box recently, 'is a gift from God, and therefore a good thing.'

This verdict was actually delivered by the rector of Arisaig, a Scottish highland community which until 1972 has had no television. Now, with an enterprise

which Reith might have commended, they have erected a mast, laid their own cables, and invited the monster box into their homes. Not everyone in the community is grateful for this blessing; the local hotel proprietor sees it as a threat, because 'There's still some innocence left here.' The children of Arisaig, he seemed to be saying, may not like having the moon in their living rooms. These doubts and certainties were uttered on *Looking In*, a somewhat less than reverential celebration of the BBC years missed by the viewers of Arisaig.

Robert Vas seems to have been given a fairly free hand for his quizzical retrospection. If his film played on nostalgia, it was by no means uncritical; looking back not through a glass darkly, but also not through rose-tinted spectacles. For one thing, the viewers them-

selves got a look in, or at least a voice. Vas punctuated his film with voice-over comments from the man in the street, and compliments were countered by decidedly uncomplimentary indifference.

With the sure touch of the fine editor he is, Vas juxtaposed moments of television history with judicious selections from television's built-in comment on itself. He began irreverently, with an array of 'Good evenings' from personalities past and present. A Union Jack unfurled round an aerial, and we cut to Alf Garnett reading 'Clean Up TV' and Hancock bemoaning an evening without the magic box. Vas had thirty-six years of material to select from, and he found some gems.

Cut in at intervals were clips from a film celebrating the first heady six months, when a privileged pre-war few were offered seemingly entertainment and enlightenment from 'the summit of Muswell Hill.' There, on the nine-inch screen, was a lady in an evening gown singing a celebratory song ('In sight and sound they trace/Pictures out of space') while trying to avoid the vase of flowers which someone had thought up as studio decor. Pictures out of space took us right into the moon shot, and 1936 looked like ancient history. As the programme kept reminding us, film now dominates television; it was startling to see just how static even programmes from the 1950s now look.

This was the technique throughout, as we jumped backwards and forwards in television time. For an hour of this ninety-minute compilation, the juxtapositions made a fascinating and revealing commentary on the nature of television as well as its history. Some of the contrasts were a bit facile ('They're God, and you begin to believe it,' said a disembodied voice of the people, and we cut to 1984 and the truth according to Big Brother); but mostly they worked succinctly,

prompting all manner of questions about the function and effect of the medium. A voice off talked of television 'balance' as 'a job for the Archangel himself', and we saw news film of an orderly picket line about which a commentator was asking us whether we could 'really afford scenes like this.' A priest asked the camera whether television intruded on grief by repeating it, and we realised that he was talking over a repeat screening of the Aberfan disaster. And for light relief, Pope Pius blessed Eurovision and ushered in the Eurovision Song Contest.

Towards the end, the film began to lose steam as it fell back on an anthology of famous moments and we were too often taken down a corridor of film cans. But Vas' film was a useful antidote to the BBC's celebration of itself, which has tended to be an uneasy mixture of snapshots from the family album and the kind of retrospective reverence which prompted a lady quoted in the film to remember Richard Dimbleby as 'epitomising everything that was English.' It would be interesting to hear what the new viewers of Arisaig thought of it. No doubt in a year's time the BBC will be telling us.

DAVID WILSON

A Hundred Years of Zukor

Longevity would not seem one of the more obvious attributes of movie moguldom. Yet three of the founding fathers are still here. Jack L. Warner, the youngest of the four Warner Brothers who opened their first nickelodeon in 1905, will be 80 next summer and will celebrate his birthday with the release of his latest production, *1776* (a Columbia release since he sold his studio in 1967). Samuel Goldwyn turned 90 last August. On January 7th, 1973, Adolph



Laurence Olivier in 'Sleuth', Joseph Mankiewicz's film from the play by Anthony Shaffer

Zukor celebrates his hundredth birthday.

Zukor, who still retains the status of 'Chairman Emeritus' of the Board of Paramount Pictures, is often to be found at the Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles. He lives in the present and is quite willing to talk about it. He thinks we should be a little ashamed of not making better films. 'With the materials, the resources, facilities and talent available, there's no excuse for producing bad pictures,' he said shortly before his hundredth birthday. He has said that before; but that's all right. 'I don't do much but I manage to be around,' he adds. 'I have the same interest in pictures—those that have been made and those that are to be made. I am as much interested today as I was fifty years ago.'

Zukor was born in Ricse, in Hungary. He came to America at the height of the Jewish immigration, a 16-year-old with the proverbial \$25 sewn into his coat-sleeve. He found work, at two dollars a week, in New York's fur trade. In 1892 he went to Chicago, where he became successful as a furrier and, in 1897, married. The Zukors had two children, Eugene and Mildred. Mrs. Zukor died in 1956.

In 1902, Zukor was back in New York and the following year ventured into the penny arcade business in association with Marcus Loew, founder of Loew's Inc. Zukor was among the independents who from 1909 fought the formidable Motion Pictures Patent Company. Long before it was dissolved by court order in 1915, Zukor, Carl Laemmle and others had found ways around the Trust (like making their films in faraway California, pleasantly close to Mexico when Thomas Edison's bullies turned up to smash cameras). Feeling the time was ripe for longer pictures, Zukor gambled big in 1912, putting down \$25,000 for the American rights to *La Reine Elisabeth*, Louis Mercanton's four-reeler starring Sarah Bernhardt. Zukor looked away from the nickelodeons and store shows and convinced Daniel Frohman, the New York theatre impresario, that even on celluloid Sarah deserved a legitimate showcase. On July 12, 1912, at the Lyceum Theatre, Americans saw their first feature-length film—and paid the unheard of price of one dollar a ticket.

'The Bernhardt picture proved people would sit through a one-hour show,' Zukor remembers today. 'I got hold of Frohman and Edwin S. Porter, who had directed the first movie that told a story (*The Great Train Robbery*, 1903), and we formed the Famous Players Film Company.' The new firm was launched with *The Prisoner of Zenda*, directed by Porter and starring James K. Hackett. ('Hackett was a very popular leading man, and theatre producers warned him he'd ruin his career if he appeared in pictures.') Zukor followed up with a



Adolph Zukor in 1972

remake (already!) of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, directed by Francis Boggs, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, directed by Porter; and lured Mary Pickford from her discoverer, D. W. Griffith. It has been said that Zukor built her a million dollar studio, and paid her as high as a million dollars a year to keep her in it. The two were to fight and make up many times.

Admitting that she was often a thorn in his side, Zukor says today, 'I was often annoyed, yes—after I had done so much for her. The right kind of publicity; pictures that people expected of her type and age.' On January 7th, the 79-year-old Mary Pickford is expected to be one of her old boss's well-wishers.

In 1916, Zukor consolidated with Jesse Lasky, who together with his brother-in-law Samuel Goldwyn and Cecil B. DeMille had made successful full-length features. Lasky decided to back the more organised Zukor instead of his stormy brother-in-law—a move Goldwyn didn't forgive until they were both old men. The consolidation merged Zukor's Famous Players, his two-year-old distribution company, Paramount Pictures, and Lasky's firm. In 1919, Zukor floated a \$10 million issue of preferred stock, marking the beginning of the modern film industry, and two years later Paramount was in virtual control of 500 cinemas in the US and first-run theatres in major cities around the world. Moviehouse owners combined to stop Zukor. The Federal Trade Commission stepped in and brought suit against Paramount for unfair trade practices. After eight years in court, nothing much was achieved, and the issue of joint production and theatre ownership was postponed for twenty-five years.

With the arrival of sound, Zukor found he had been as blind to the future as the Motion Pictures Patent Company in 1912. Lasky left the vice-presidency in 1932 and the following year Paramount went bankrupt, to be

reorganised in 1935 as Paramount Pictures, Inc., with control passing to Wall Street interests—including J. P. Morgan and Co., the most powerful financial group during the Depression, which at one point had interests in all the eight 'majors'. Zukor remained chairman.

As required by the 'consent decree' of 1949, which finally divorced production from theatre ownership, Paramount sold off its cinemas; but Zukor continued as chairman. In 1966, Paramount was swallowed up by the conglomerate Gulf and Western Industries.

All of which leaves Zukor mildly bemused. He has survived more than his share of 'terrible ups and downs,' as he understates. He calls Charles Bluhdorn, the president of Gulf and Western, 'a very able businessman,' and Robert Evans, the present Paramount production chief, 'a mere youngster.' 'Youngsters, all youngsters... When I think back, I myself was the same age as the present management when I started—around forty.'

Zukor is proud of Paramount's turnaround with *Love Story* and *The Godfather*, after the financial disasters (*Darling Lili*, *Catch 22*, etc.) which resulted in a \$22 million loss. He also finds it heartening that films now have a longer lifetime. 'Hollywood is gradually coming back. Don't forget the development of stars is a much harder and slower process than in the past. Also, not as many pictures are being made—what used to play three days, even in a small town, can now play four or five weeks. The exhibitor no longer has to buy a hundred pictures a year.'

'Motion pictures are as necessary as wearing shoes or clothing or, for that matter, eating. They're part of our existence and they do a great service, for they give people the opportunity, for comparatively little money, to get out of their own world and into another.'

Happy birthday, Mr. Zukor.

AXEL MADSEN

December 7th

Gregg Toland, perhaps Hollywood's greatest cameraman, was a frustrated director; but the cinematographer of *Citizen Kane* and *The Grapes of Wrath* directed only one feature, *December 7th*, a documentary on Pearl Harbour for John Ford's Field Photographic Branch of the Office of Strategic Services.

Its appearance in the NFT's Ford retrospective, although disappointing to those hoping for a visual feast—the lighting is professional but seldom more—was something of an event. After only one 1942 Washington showing, the film was withdrawn because it reflected on the court case then pending over responsibility for the Pearl Harbour débâcle, and it has seldom been seen since. The Oscar-winning two-reel version edited by Robert Parrish and written by Budd Schulberg in 1944 contains mainly the scenes of salvage and repair, a footnote to the body of Toland's elaborate dramatised documentary.

Walter Huston's Uncle Sam, complete with star-spangled waistcoat, luxuriates in a Hawaiian mansion until Harry Davenport, the folksy Mr. C. (for Conscience), arrives to vex him with reminders of the Fifth Column in Honolulu, the evils of Shinto (Philip Ahn as a priest silkily misrepresents this gentle religion) and America's perennial unpreparedness. Recreations of the raid are intercut with now familiar newsreels of burning ships and their salvage, and Dana Andrews appears as the archetypal Unknown Sailor in two epilogues. In the first he summons the dead to identify themselves, and in the second strolls through a military cemetery with an anonymous casualty of the First War, discussing the world situation in terms of baseball. Having missed its chance to graduate from sandlot games by rejecting Wilsonian pacifism, the U.S.A. now faces the challenge of Big League warfare.

Since the roll-call of combatants appears also in *The Battle of Mid-*

'Ludwig II': Visconti with Romy Schneider and Helmut Berger



way, one of the few documentaries Ford signed, it was assumed he had had a hand in *December 7th*. Robert Parrish, Ford's wartime editor and now a veteran director, has vivid memories of this and other OSS projects. Like most of these films, *December 7th* was, he recalls, mainly a confidential production for the high command; Toland was also to have made a second film for general propaganda use. Sam Engel, later producer of *My Darling Clementine*, was producer/writer, Toland directed and lit the film, which operator Eddie Pyle shot. They left for Hawaii in February 1942, and some weeks later Ford joined them.

While in Honolulu, Ford heard through the OSS of an impending Japanese air/sea advance, and in May went to Midway Island with cameraman Jack Mackenzie to shoot the battle. Parrish, then a Third Class Petty Officer, was enmeshed in the resulting cloak-and-dagger movement of the footage, which Ford had no official permission to shoot, but he eventually edited it into *The Battle of Midway*.

'A few weeks later,' he says, 'Ford sent me to California with specific instructions to show *The Battle of Midway* to Toland and Engel. I knew both of them and hoped they would like it. However, when the running was over they got up and walked out of the projection room without comment. I went to see Toland and said, "What do you think, Gregg?" He said, "I don't wish to discuss it." What I didn't know was that many of the ideas in *The Battle of Midway* were part of *December 7th*. My guess is that Toland, Ford and Engel had worked out the story for *December 7th* before Toland and Engel went to Honolulu; then when Ford was presented with the opportunity to make *Battle of Midway* he used some of the same ideas that he had developed with them. The two-reel *Battle of Midway* was completed and ready for release while Toland and Engel were still editing *December 7th*. Ford is a realist. He felt it was important to get a propaganda message to the American public as quickly as possible. I think his idea was to cut through all the red tape with a documentary that said, "We're in the war and we've just scored our first major victory."'

Ford's involvement in these propaganda pieces has always been shadowy. *We Sail at Midnight*, a documentary often credited to him, was actually directed by Julian Spiro for the Crown Film Unit, though Ford may have added an American commentary. Parrish refutes the myth of a planned Nazi war crimes film that was cancelled. He edited this thirteen-hour report himself, with Budd Schulberg, and saw it shown at Nuremberg. He also confirms the existence of *Torpedo Squadron 8*. Ford assigned him to edit the footage about this air squadron, only one man of which survived Midway, into a short that was



'The Long Goodbye': Sterling Hayden, Nina Van Pallandt, Elliott Gould (as Marlowe) in Robert Altman's film of the Raymond Chandler novel

reduced to 8 mm and distributed to the families of the dead.

But obviously the bulk of Ford's wartime material, made for secret screening to the top brass, had even more limited circulation. 'He went to Midway,' Parrish says. 'He took a unit to Africa and shot the North African landings. He took a tanker to Chungking and was involved with Chiang Kai-Shek and Chennault. Ford never liked being an administrator. He would go out and do things.'

JOHN BAXTER

The Lion on the Wall

British Lion has fallen victim to the first company law of the commercial jungle: the fate of unprofitable companies is to be taken over by people who reckon they can do better with the company's assets. Thus last April British Lion was delivered by its directors into the hands of Barclay Securities, run by 32-year-old John Bentley.

It is not easy to run a company in a declining industry. All the major American distributors went through the bloodbath and came out leaner. They wrote massive sums off their optimistic valuation of films, chopped overheads, and, if they still had any, cut back on studios. In minor key, British Lion had, and could not face up to, the same problems. Being small, it was in a worse position: it never had enough capital to produce a continuing programme of films with international appeal, or—to turn the knife—the talent. Thus, with a smaller number of films to offer the hardboiled Americans, it had less chance of striking it rich with the one-in-twenty winner. In the great and good years when America swam in the pool of British talent (1966 to 1968) studio profits were buoyant (over £200,000 a year). But then the

Yanks went home, and the NFFC ran out of money, and film production started drying up, and what there was had shrunken budgets.

So British Lion decided to diversify. A sensible decision had they been successful in carrying out a difficult task. The board decided to offer ancillary services to the commercial television companies. Around £500,000 was spent on outside broadcasting equipment—at a time when there was severe overcapacity in commercial television because of the addition of an extra national networking company, London Weekend. This was done together with Hambros Bank, its financial advisers. Lion Television never made a profit, and the money could have been better spent on making films, or plastic gnomes.

Another diversification was publishing, a well-known financial disaster area. The former directors have, admirably, bought Davis-Poynter back from Lion for £40,000; in 1972 it lost £23,600. The best and most rational diversification was to buy the family business of Pearl and Dean from Ernie Pearl. It was bought in August 1970 for a hefty £1.4m and in its financial year ending the following month made profits of £236,000. But in the following year, profits slumped to a mere £3,000, which is a lousy return on an investment of £1.4m, on any criterion.

In film distribution and production, the company's *raison d'être*, losses continued—£57,000 on distribution in 1972 before the small matter of a write-off of around £650,000 on films and properties. The net effect of the mainstream activities and diversifications of British Lion in the year to March 1972 was a loss of £1m. The board had sought to merge with Star Associated

Holdings, the largest private chain of bingo halls and cinemas in the country, run from Leeds by the Eckhart brothers. Discussions started in November 1971, but, as is so often the case with private companies, terms could not be agreed speedily. So, in April, enter John Bentley.

What interested him about British Lion was: the 59 acres of Shepperton Studios, plumb in the middle of the £100,000-an-acre stockbroker belt; the film library; Pearl and Dean; and the stock market quotation. One of Barclay's directors, Jeremy Arnold, had been busy rationalising the outdoor poster industry, and Bentley wanted to take his profit. So the poster company, Mills and Allen, has been sold by Barclay Securities to Lion International (as it now is) for £9.6m in shares. In November some of these shares in Lion were sold to the public, which now owns 51 per cent of the company, for 160p a share. This compares with the 130p a share at which Bentley got control, and the 50p at which the shares were selling before the news of negotiations with Star got around. The directors have done well for their shareholders. The directors sold their shares to Bentley for 135p.

The crux of the financial dealery was Shepperton; Bentley had to unlock some £4m from it so that Lion could afford to buy Mills and Allen. But the NFFC, which half-owned and then fully-owned British Lion from after the bankruptcy of 1955 until 1964, when it was sold to a consortium of filmmakers, retained a special share, which entitled the NFFC to the benefits of the huge cushion of tax losses that had been built up. And also gave it the right to veto the disposal of Shepperton unless film-making could only continue there at a loss. After tough bargaining, Lion was permitted to do as best as it could with two-thirds

of the site, but the rest had to be maintained as functioning studios and ancillary services. Stages A, B, C and D and the associated dubbing theatres and workshops are safe; so are at least 200 out of the 350 jobs. Discussions are on with Rank to operate Pinewood and Shepperton on a more rational basis; but, as a tightly run small studio, Shepperton can probably now function profitably even if it stays on its own.

Lion is to maintain production of films to 'at least the same level as hitherto', and enough studios (and more) remain open to cater for the needs of the industry in present conditions. Perhaps the NFFC should have tried to collar some of the £4m plus that the sale of Shepperton will raise, as cash is needed more badly than studio hardware as raw material for making films and creating jobs. But John Bentley has ensured the future survival of as much film-making as there was, and there are £1.6m of poster and advertising profits to absorb the losses. This is a nice kind of writing to have on the wall.

DAVID GORDON

1972: Obituary

DECEMBER '71: Dita Parlo, shy bride of Vigo's *L'Atalante*; Roy Disney, brother of Walt and the financial brains of the Disney organisation; Max Steiner, Hollywood composer (*Gone with the Wind*, *Casablanca*); Stuart Holmes, ubiquitous villain of Hollywood silent films (*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*); Burton Gillette, pioneer animator and the Disney studios' first 'director'.

JANUARY: Maurice Chevalier, ambassador of charm (*The Love Parade*, *Love Me Tonight*, *Gigi*); Dorothy Comingore, Kane's Susan Alexander; Wesley Ruggles, director brother of Charles (*Cimarron*, *I'm No Angel*); Rochelle Hudson, Hollywood actress of long service (*Gone With the Wind*, *Rebel Without a Cause*); Hugh McDermott, Scottish-born actor.

FEBRUARY: Jessie Royce Landis, American character actress, often seen as disenchanted screen mother (*To Catch a Thief*, *North By Northwest*); Walter Lang, director of several lavish musicals (*Call Me Madam*, *Can Can*, *The King and I*); John Grierson, founding father of the British documentary movement; Alec Coppel, playwright and screenwriter (*Vertigo*); Lucien Hubbard, writer of early Pearl White serials, later producer (*42nd Street*, *The Maltese Falcon*).

MARCH: Marilyn Maxwell, Hollywood actress and singer (*The Lemon Drop Kid*, *Summer Holiday*); J. Arthur (Lord) Rank; Bronislava Nijinska, sister of the dancer and choreographer for Reinhardt's *Dream*; Bruce Bushman, veteran animator.

APRIL: Brian Donlevy, versatile Hollywood heavy (*Beau Geste*, *The*

Glass Key, *The Great McGinty*), later the first screen Quatermass; Betty Blythe, silent star (*The Queen of Sheba*), also appeared in over fifty talkies; George Sanders, suave master crook or sardonic wit of many a film (*All About Eve*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*); Bobby Howes, British musical comedy star of the 30s (*The Ghost Train*); Alfred Goulding, Hollywood director of over 500 films, including Laurel and Hardy and Harold Lloyd comedies; Gia Scala, Irish-Italian actress (*The Guns of Navarone*); Albert Mannheimer, Hollywood screenwriter; Alan Cameron, scenarist and gagman for the Marx Bros.; Dorothy Dalton, silent star (*The Flame of the Yukon*, *The Vagabond Prince*).

MAY: Bruce Cabot, dependable supporting actor with long career from *King Kong* to *Diamonds Are Forever*; Harry Joe Brown, producer of Budd Boetticher's Westerns; Dan Blocker, portly comic actor of film and television; Nigel Green, sombre and rugged British actor (*Zulu*, *The Kremlin Letter*); Frank Tashlin, talented comedy director, best known for Jerry Lewis films (also *Bachelor Flat*, *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*); Sidney Franklin, Hollywood producer and director (*The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *The Good Earth*); Margaret Rutherford, imposing British comedy actress, created Agatha Christie's Miss Marple on the screen; Asta Nielsen, Danish actress and star of silent films, including the 1920 *Hamlet*; Henri Diamant-Berger, veteran French producer and director; Steve Ihnat, reliable American character actor (*The Chase*, *Madigan*), lately turned director with *The Honkers*.

JUNE: Richard Day, Hollywood art director (*How Green Was My Valley*, *On the Waterfront*); Nicholas Hannen, British stage actor occasionally seen in films (*Richard III*); Paul Czinner, Austrian-born director who brought Elisabeth Bergner to the screen (*Dreaming Lips*, *Ariane*).

JULY: Brandon de Wilde, Hollywood child star of the 50s (*Member of the Wedding*, *Shane*), more recently in *All Fall Down* and *Hud*; Emrys Jones, dependable British actor (*The Trials of Oscar Wilde*).

AUGUST: Pierre Brasseur, French actor who starred in the Carné-Prévert films, and more recently in *Les Yeux sans Visage* and *Goto*; Oscar Levant, moonfaced, sardonic screen personality and Gershwin pianist (*An American in Paris*, *The Band Wagon*); Roger Furse, British stage and screen designer (*Henry V*, *Odd Man Out*); Tom Neal, tough guy of scores of B-films.

SEPTEMBER: Max Fleischer, cartoonist and creator of Popeye; William Boyd, silver-haired romantic lead for DeMille, later Hopalong Cassidy; Akim Tamiroff, Russian-born American character



actor, often as amiable rogue (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Five Graves to Cairo*, *Touch of Evil*); Edgar G. Ulmer, director of numerous films noirs of the 30s (*The Black Cat*, *Strange Illusion*).

OCTOBER: Miriam Hopkins, tough, buoyant comedy actress of the 30s and 40s (*Trouble in Paradise*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Becky Sharp*); Leo G. Carroll, American character actor, often in avuncular or professorial roles (*Waterloo Bridge*, *Spellbound*, *North By Northwest*); Mitchell Leisen, one-time art director for DeMille, later stylish Paramount director (*Midnight*, *Easy Living*).

NOVEMBER: Reginald Owen, veteran British character actor in scores of Hollywood films, often playing stuffy aristocratic types (*Queen Christina*, *Mrs. Miniver*); Francis Chagrin, prolific British composer (*The Golditz Story*, *The Intruder*); Sylvester Gates, banker and Chairman of the British Film Institute from 1956 to 1964, a period which saw the building of the National Film Theatre and the foundation of the London Film Festival; Richard Mallett, film critic of *Punch* from 1938 to 1972.

1972: The Top Ten

ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER
*** THE CEREMONY *** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** FAT CITY *** L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** LUCIA *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER *** THE MOON AND THE SLEDGEHAMMER *** TEN DAYS' WONDER
—Jan Dawson

ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER
*** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** THE CULPEPPER CATTLE COMPANY *** DELIVERANCE *** DIRTY HARRY *** FAT CITY *** JUNIOR BONNER *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER
—Philip French

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER *** THE CEREMONY *** DUEL *** FAT CITY *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev) *** A NEW LEAF *** THE NIGHT OF COUNTING THE YEARS *** THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS
—John Gillett

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER *** THE CEREMONY *** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** FAT CITY *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev) *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER *** A NEW LEAF *** THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS
—Penelope Houston

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** A NEW LEAF *** THE DECAMERON *** LE BOUCHER *** BLEAK MOMENTS *** LOVE *** ANNE AND MURIEL *** TEN DAYS' WONDER *** DELIVERANCE *** LA RUPTURE
—Gavin Millar

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** LE BOUCHER *** THE CEREMONY *** DELIVERANCE *** EVEN DWARFS STARTED SMALL *** FAT CITY *** JUNIOR BONNER *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** LA RUPTURE *** TEN DAYS' WONDER
—Tom Milne

FAMILY LIFE *** A NEW LEAF *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER *** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** THE NIGHT OF COUNTING THE YEARS *** LE BOUCHER *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev) *** LOVE *** FAT CITY
—David Robinson

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY *** LE BOUCHER *** THE DECAMERON *** EVEN DWARFS STARTED SMALL *** FAT CITY *** FRENZY *** THE GODFATHER *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** LOVE
—Richard Roud

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** LE BOUCHER *** DELIVERANCE *** LA RUPTURE *** THE CEREMONY *** FAT CITY *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** FRENZY *** THE GODFATHER *** TEN DAYS' WONDER
—Philip Strick

THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES *** L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** LE BOUCHER *** OS FUZIS *** BLEAK MOMENTS *** LUCIA *** FAT CITY *** LOVE *** A NEW LEAF *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev)
—David Wilson

Left, above: Maurice Chevalier, Margaret Rutherford, Akim Tamiroff (in 'Confidential Report')



John Gillett

JAPANESE NOTEBOOK

'Very interesting place, London,' remarked Mr. Hisakazu Tsuji, friend and scriptwriter for Mizoguchi. 'My wife and I arrived in our hotel, turned on the television and there was the complete version of *Seven Samurai*—which isn't available in Japan.'

The BBC screening was, indeed, quite an event. Lasting about 3½ hours, in this original but previously unseen version, *Seven Samurai* now divides logically into two parts, exposition and battle, with the second half beginning with the scouting operation around the village. The new material is to be found mainly in the first part and in interludes between the final battles—small, cumulative incidents during the gathering together of the samurai. And a richer portrait emerges of their relationship with the farmers, emphasising the villagers' class consciousness and occasional cowardices, even at the height of the battle with the bandits. A particularly acute moment comes on the eve of the climactic fight, when all the surviving men expect to die and the farmers produce a hidden cache of food and wine for the delectation of the samurai.

Mifune's characterisation also emerges more strongly, through the linking of his poverty-stricken, unsettled youth with the plight of one of the village babies. In fact, the only new material which seems expendable is the budding romance between the youngest warrior and a village girl whose father has made her disguise herself as a boy—in any case, this kind of romantic

idyll never came easily to Kurosawa. A newish print, fresh and literate subtitles, and the overwhelming flow and vigour of the narrative, helped to make this a triumph for BBC's World Cinema series. *Seven Samurai* incidentally garnered an audience estimated at about five million, perhaps the highest yet for a subtitled film on TV.

While he was in London, Hisakazu Tsuji talked to Eric Rhode and myself about his work with Mizoguchi. The portrait that emerged was a decidedly surprising one. For, after half-an-hour or so, it seemed that he was describing a figure as puzzlingly contradictory as John Ford, and a far cry from the delicate, filigree, defiantly aesthetic artist that most of the films suggest. 'He drank a lot and had a very foul mouth on the set. Not that Mizoguchi talked much—he assumed that the actors knew the script, and if they asked how they should react to a certain scene, he simply replied "look at the words".'

The scenario was clearly the most important single factor for Mizoguchi. Mr. Tsuji described in detail the terrible discussions which took place regularly whenever he and Yoshikata Yoda (Mizoguchi's perennial scriptwriter) began work on a new project. On being presented with a first draft, Mizoguchi would simply scribble 'no good, no good' all over it and hand it back. Other drafts would be given similar treatment (with a rare complimentary comment), until a few days before shooting began when



Mizoguchi reluctantly agreed to a script being printed. Even then, extensive re-writing would be done on the floor. 'He never told us what was wrong, only that it was stereotyped and would not inspire him, the actors or the audience; he cunningly forced us to develop our ideas up to the point which matched his. He was very direct: when the popular writer Matsutaro Kawaguchi was working on the stories which formed *Ugetsu*, Mizoguchi greeted Yoda and myself with, "Kawaguchi is so great, you are so small." I only remember him saying "thank you very much" once, which was at the end of *Shin Heike Monogatari*.'

How did the studio staff respond to this cavalier treatment? 'We did not resent it, since we understood his manner. But we were always surprised when we saw how good the finished product was. Then we forgot all the bad language and the arguments and thought next time we would have to do even better.' On his collaboration with the great cameraman Miyagawa, Tsuji was convinced that the main camera ideas came from Mizoguchi. 'He would sometimes shoot just one long scene a day, with five or six takes. This used to worry the production manager, but Mizoguchi would pass it off by saying the actors were no good.' Ford and Wyler were apparently Mizoguchi's

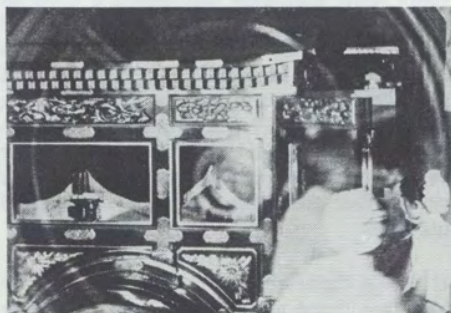
Above: Kimugasa demonstrates how female impersonators walked on stage. Photo: Nicoletta Zalaffi. Right: Kurosawa sweeps his set.



KINUGASA'S

Frame stills illustrating the style of key sequences in Teinosuke Kinugasa's recently rediscovered *A Page of Madness*. Made in 1926, this visually extraordinary, surrealist film is set in an asylum, and concerns an old seaman secretly trying to organise the escape of his mad wife.





A PAGE OF MADNESS



favourite foreign directors. 'I remember when I saw that scene of the samurai returning from battle in *Shin Heike*—that was influenced by *Yellow Ribbon* and other Ford films.'

Finally, we asked about those last great years with Daiei when Mizoguchi seemed to be summing up all his feelings about the past and produced his finest portraits of women. 'He was always a cross between a romantic and a realist. During this last period, I don't think he was influenced by outside conditions, he was interested only in films. It was his inner development—he had simply grown up. He had a special eye, but he never talked about his feelings. Somehow, we understood that and loved him.'

We talked about Japanese film history with Mr. Tsuji, who was a film critic in his early days, and were advised to study the silent work of Kinugasa, Murata and Daisuke Ito ('the first director to modernise the costume play and bring in comments on contemporary life'). Kinugasa's *A Page of Madness* (called *A Crazy Page* in some sources) coincidentally turned up as a last-minute fringe event in the National Film Theatre's recent Japanese season, and proved to be a remarkable visual experiment seemingly years ahead of its time (see centre-page illustrations). Like the only other early Kinugasa film known here, *Crossways*, it has a dreamlike continuity somewhat reminiscent of those textbook American and French avant-garde 'classics'. Then one remembers its production date: 1926. Although Kinugasa might at that date have seen *Caligari*, *The Last Laugh* (see the last corridor shot of his film) and the Gance of *La Roue*, his use of abstract imagery is more radical and innovatory. The film culminates in several hallucinatory sequences built up from layers of superimpositions, in which we seem to be inside the minds of the patients in a lunatic asylum as the real world dissolves around them into anguish and unreason.

A Page of Madness takes place almost entirely within the confines of the asylum, and follows the pathetic attempts of an old seaman, now working as a janitor, to release his wife, who has been incarcerated since an attempt to drown herself and her baby son. He dreams of their earlier happy life, becomes involved in an asylum riot, and, after the wife has refused to leave, resigns himself to a dreary life of sweeping and cleaning. Daringly, the film was made without titles; which makes it difficult for a Western audience to pinpoint all the interweaving plot strands. On a second viewing, the divisions between reality and fantasy become much clearer.

Nothing, however, can obscure the richness of Kinugasa's invention: a tracking camera moves down a corridor into a struggling mêlée of patients and doctors and then retreats back through the heaving bodies; the wife gazes moodily at a tree in the garden, which suddenly contracts as though in a fairground mirror; a girl dancing in her cell turns into an obscene blob as the crazy men ogle her. Everywhere images of bars cut across the screen, blurring and distorting faces and cutting off the inmates from the hard-pressed staff. The surrealist force of this imagery presumably stems from the scenario of

Yasunari Kawabata (author of *Snow Country*); yet the continually probing, moving camera and use of revolving objects suffused in a tinselly light looks forward to Kinugasa's later *Crossways*. The whole *mise en scène*, as well as the mature acting style, suggests a phenomenal sophistication for the time.

Made in a small, ill-equipped studio, *A Page of Madness* was understandably a commercial failure on its original release. Apparently, it lay unnoticed for over forty years until Kinugasa discovered a copy in his garden storeroom. Its recent reappraisal in Japan and Europe has given Kinugasa (now 76) a new lease of life: he has declared it to be the favourite of his hundred films and feels himself to be a modern cineaste again. Certainly, this discovery is a major event, confirming that the Japanese 1920s is yet another goldmine waiting to be opened up.

None of the recent Japanese films at the NFT provided anything like an equivalent revelation. But at least they demonstrated that, despite all the 'eroductions' and the TV competition, Japanese directors can still turn out quality films, ranging from feature-length cartoons like *Puss 'n Boots*, with its consistently lively animation and an awesome Demon King castle destined for spectacular disintegration, to a fairly commercial samurai drama like *The Red Lion*. Produced by and starring Mifune and directed by Kihachi Okamoto, this handsomely designed picture has some splendid battles and a masterly climax in which hundreds of peasants literally dance their defiance against their oppressors down the village street. Again, one senses that peculiarly Japanese exuberance in the sheer act of film-making.

Curiously, the firmly established directors provided the few disappointments—Ichi-kawa's *To Love Again* has already been lamented in these pages, and two newish Shindo films (*Live Today, Die Tomorrow* and *Heat Wave Island*) confirmed his failure to rise above essentially melodramatic scripts. More hopefully, we saw for the first time in Britain work by Yoji Yamada and Hideo Gosha, two film-makers in their forties who have helped to bring back some of the wayward home audience.

Yamada is known in Japan mainly for his phenomenally successful 'Tora-san' series of domestic comedies—a sort of fusion of Dales and Archers, but done with rather more skill and affection. 'Commercial Ozu,' as someone has called them. *Am I Trying* shows the awkward hero Torajiro almost muddling up his sister's marriage, and falling hopelessly in love himself. Yamada brings a drily witty tone to his family squabbles and there are some engaging cameo roles from old favourites like Takashi Shimura and Chishu Ryu. Ryu also appears as a doddering but resilient grandfather in *Where Spring Comes Late*, which deals with the emigration of a family to Hokkaido. Here, Yamada strikingly creates the feeling of a journey—by boat, train, car—with location shooting remarkable for its immediacy and precision of place. Casual meetings in the train, the suffocating and lethal bustle of Expo 70, the sheer weight of people everywhere the family goes, are finally contrasted with the open air calm of

the Hokkaido farm where the film reaches its slightly starry-eyed conclusion.

An earlier work, *A Trap* (1965), shows Yamada in a much harsher and blacker mood. Beginning as a straightforward *policier* about a young man who may or may not have killed a money-lender, the film develops a real Dostoevskian mood as the boy's sister implacably sets out to ruin the lawyer who refused to help them. Yamada's consistently fluent way with actors and camera is aptly demonstrated in the closing scenes set in mist-shrouded back streets (shades of Carné), where lawyer and girl take nightly walks as their cat and mouse game reaches its climax.

Hideo Gosha's *Tenchu!*, about a hired assassin who gets tired of being used as a tool by his revolutionary leader but can't escape his influence, starts off like any other sword-slashing melodrama. Its gradual shift into an allegory on the abuses of power probably stems from the intelligent scenario of one of Kurosawa's collaborators, Shinobu Hashimoto. On the evidence of this film, Gosha has a refined and varied visual sense—static, conspiratorial groupings with marvellous deployment of the 'Scope screen are contrasted with darkly lit fights in alleys and rain-flecked streets—and a flair for comic and dramatic set-pieces. Izo, the killer, runs all the way from one town to another in order to get in on an ambush. When he arrives, Gosha stages it with maximum ferocity. As bodies hurtle through screens or topple bloodily downstairs before a frenzied camera, one can see how Ito's influence still survives, for he began it all fifty years ago. Interesting, also, to see the writer Yukio Mishima playing the kind of samurai he tried to emulate in real life—and, more than ironically, committing harakiri on screen.

Shohei Imamura's *Legends from a Southern Island* came as a surprise after the quirky, small-scale *Pornographer* of six years ago. A three-hour epic shot on one of the southern Ryuku islands, the film is a strange, even bewildering, mixture of Buñuelian eccentricities, echoes of the backward family

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'Tenchu!' Shintaro Katsu



Ray's new trilogy

An interview by Christian Braad Thomsen



'Company Limited': Sharmila Tagore and Barun Chanda. 'The Adversary': the queue for work.

Satyajit Ray began his career with the poetic *Apu* trilogy, the study of a young man's attempt to find himself and come to terms with the eternal conditions of life and its two opposite poles: love and death. Ray's three most recent films in effect form another trilogy, the main characters being seen this time in relation to their work. It is a political trilogy, about how we are being shaped, and perhaps misshapen, by our working conditions. *Days and Nights in the Forest*, the least direct of the three, shows a group of city executives on a country weekend, away from the suffocating atmosphere of Calcutta. *The Adversary* returns to Calcutta, where a young man revolts against the inhuman conditions attached to his search for a job. And the third film, *Company Limited*, once more takes the audience round the other side of the desk to show the manipulations and status-seeking at the top of a big firm.

Company Limited was the opening film at the 1972 London Film Festival. Ray is now working on *Distant Thunder*, his second film in colour, based on a book by the author of *Pather Panchali*.

Did you consciously set out with the idea that *Days and Nights in the Forest*, *The Adversary* and *Company Limited* would form a new trilogy?

SATYAJIT RAY: I didn't think of it during the first two films. I made *Days and Nights* because I liked the story, and as for *The Adversary*... well, I made it because the situation in Calcutta was politically so tense. The students were very active, there was a lot of violence in the city, and if I was going to make another film it seemed it had to be about Calcutta and the young people there. Then last year I read the novel *Company Limited* is based on, and I immediately thought that this was an important theme. After describing the young man looking for a job in *The Adversary*, it was relevant for me to describe the people who have control over the jobs, the new upper class, the new breed that has grown up in India since Independence. You see, in a sense the British have not really left...

You seem in this new trilogy to have acquired a political awareness which was perhaps less openly stated in your previous films.

Possibly, but politics has also come increasingly to the surface in the last three or four years. You feel it every moment of the day in Calcutta: not just the bombs and the explosions, but meeting people and walking the streets with the posters on the walls. Of course I have never been unaware of politics, but I have deliberately not used political issues as such in my films because I have always felt that in India politics is a very impermanent thing. Political parties break up very quickly, and I don't believe in the Left as such any more. There are now three communist parties in India, and I don't really see what that means.

How have the three films been received in India?

Before I made *The Adversary*, I'd often been criticised for being non-political. After that film, they thought I had become politically committed, and it was very well received. There's a revolutionary character in *The Adversary*, which is enough for the more simple-minded people. They don't see the depths of the film, they just see that there is some mention of politics. But my previous film, *Days and Nights in the Forest*, wasn't understood in India. They thought it very frivolous because of its surface, but they completely missed the implications of the structure, which I think makes it one of my best pictures. It's a complex film with seven characters, and in its final form very satisfying to me.

I would agree that it's one of your best films. But doesn't the lack of a real storyline mean that it's bound to be rather difficult for an audience?

It's rather a film about relationships, and very complex in structure, like a kind of fugue. People in India kept saying: What is it about, where is the story, the theme? And the film is about so many things, that's the trouble. People want just one theme, which they can hold in their hands. I made the film primarily because I was fascinated by this aspect of people being taken out of their normal surroundings, and the way their characters emerge in an unfamiliar setting, away from their daily routine. *Kanchenjunga* was the same kind of film, and also misunderstood. It's also a very complex

and in my own eyes a very beautiful film, my only one in colour.

It has something like eight or nine characters, a whole family on holiday, just promenading one afternoon, two hours of their lives. But so many things happen. There are two daughters, one is married, and she's having a great quarrel with her husband, talking about divorce but staying together because of their child. The younger daughter has found a suitor on their holiday, and he wants to propose to her this afternoon. He's an engineering executive with a bright future, but his values aren't those of the girl. The father hopes the girl will say yes to him, but for the first time in this family there is someone who doesn't do what the father wants, and she turns him down. Then there's another young man from Calcutta, an ordinary middle class young man, but on the same mental wavelength as the girl, and there is a hint that there may be a future for those two. And there's the young son, a flirt and a totally frivolous character, who within the two hours of the film's time loses one girl and immediately finds another one.

But what interests me most in *Kanchenjunga* is the younger daughter and her new friend, who at one point feels that if he manages to please the girl's big autocrat father, then maybe he'll get a job. The father, who has five big companies, talks with the young man about the past, about the British, and the stupid terrorists who rotted in jail while he himself is still alive; and he does offer the boy a job. But the boy turns it down. He tells the girl that if it had happened over an office desk in Calcutta he might have accepted it, but here in this marvellous place amid the mountains and the snow he feels like a giant. He's pleased to be able to say no. For me, *Kanchenjunga* is an exploration of people coming out of their shells, and a forerunner to the more political trilogy. And that's what interests me in both *Kanchenjunga* and *Days and Nights*: taking people out of their ordinary surroundings and discovering the self behind the facade, what really goes on in their minds. There's a lot said in the films about money and values and security and how you accept immoral actions to reach your social goals.

The second film in the trilogy, *The Adversary*, got a lukewarm reception from some European critics, who suggested that from a stylistic point of view it was more hesitant and less structurally complete than your other work. You use a lot of flashbacks, dream sequences, and scenes in negative. Why the change of style?

Everything I did was of course quite deliberate. I think the main character always dictates the style of a film; and particularly in this case, where you identify totally with the young man. He's a hesitant character, full of doubts and inner conflicts and problems, and with him at the centre of the film I couldn't think in terms of a smoothly told story in my usual 'classical' style. I felt all the time I was writing the scenario that if it took a straightforward line and was stylistically orthodox, then it would be wrong. That's why I introduced stylistic factors which are new in my work.

The film opens for instance with the death of the father, shown in negative, and there were many reasons for doing it that way. The scene describes the death of a

person whom you don't know, and who is not a character in the film. It is a totally impersonal death scene, and death is very difficult to portray on the screen. If it had been in positive, everybody might have looked for signs of life because they are not emotionally involved with this character. And that mustn't happen: the theme must immediately capture the audience. So I started with negative, and since I had done it once I thought, why not do it again later. In the dream sequence I also find it perfectly valid; and I use the effect in another sequence, which might equally well have been in positive. That's the scene where a friend takes the young man to a prostitute, and he becomes disgusted and runs away. At one point the prostitute starts to undress, and she is just in her bra and lights a cigarette. Bengali girls don't usually smoke in public, and in India the audience is very conservative, so to soften the impact of that scene I used negative.

The problem with the young man in *The Adversary* is that there are a lot of

things going on in his head, and he has no one to communicate his thoughts to. For instance, he goes to see his sister's boss, and suddenly—bang-bang-bang—he stands there with a revolver shooting the boss. And then you find out that this is only happening in his mind. In fact, he had been rather polite and nervous, so how could I suggest that he actually wanted to murder the boss? There was no way other than an imaginary flash-forward.

Since people have become used to a certain classical style in my films, I knew the criticisms would come. If it had been the work of an unknown director, the critics would probably have accepted it. But I really don't care about the criticism, and maybe in five or six years when they see it in retrospect, they will find it all right. And I wanted it to be apparent also in the style that this was my first political film: a different film from what I had done before, so let it be different.

But still, you chose to make the film about the young man who has doubts



'Company Limited': Sharmila Tagore (above and below) as the sister-in-law; Barun Chanda (below) as the company executive



about his role in society, whereas his brother, who is a revolutionary, is a background character. If you wanted it to be a really political film, why didn't you make it about the revolutionary?

Because a person with a definite political line is often psychologically less interesting: revolutionaries don't think for themselves all the time. I was more interested in the young man who didn't have any firm political convictions and who wanted a job under no matter what regime. He thought for himself, and therefore he was suffering. Besides, he carries out an act of protest on a personal level, which to me is a marvellous thing because it comes from inside and not as an expression of a political ideology.

In *Company Limited* there is also a revolutionary character in the background. In fact, we don't see him at all, but we learn that he is the boyfriend of the sister-in-law, the character who is obviously the moral centre of the film.

Yes, but in a way the sister-in-law is in a tragic situation, because she came to Calcutta in order to find out what social success was like, and what her elder sister's life with her

to remain a human being in his circumstances. So she arrives, and at first everything seems all right. But when the crisis comes at the factory, he collapses completely. It's evident then that he can only think about his own success, his own career going ahead no matter at what cost.

But isn't it your intention to suggest that this girl, and her relationship to the revolutionary, really poses a moral and political solution to the problems the film raises?

Well, in a way she is in the same situation as the boy in *The Adversary*. She's uncertain, though at the end of the film she probably will go back to the revolutionary because she's so completely disillusioned with the other kind of life she has witnessed. But she first needed to be exposed to this kind of life in order to make her decision. I always feel that you must know two sides of a problem before you can make up your mind. Then you can make a really strong decision which, as in *The Adversary*, is not based on the dictates of an ideology but mainly springs from your own, human experience.

This is another interesting aspect of your political films, that they don't resemble...

...the films of Godard and Glauber Rocha and the rest? No, certainly not, because I still believe in the individual and in personal concepts rather than in a broad ideology, which keeps changing all the time.

On a political level, your films are strongly critical of the executive class, but it's vital to the films that you still try to understand the members of that class on a human level.

Absolutely. Even the British we had to understand, because the whole intellectual middle class of India is a product of British rule. Without the colonialism and the British education, there would have been no terrorism. The British gave the Bengalis a liberal education, which ultimately turned them into revolutionaries. And it's ironical that the British really created their own enemies. It took about a hundred years, and the beginning of this development is described in *Charulata*, when they start through newspapers to question the British rule. And in the early twentieth century you have the first terrorist movement against the British. That had no support from the peasants or the working class. It was a small intellectual group, whose leaders had read all the revolutionary literature, Garibaldi and the rest. They wanted to get rid of the British, and they thought: why not throw bombs at them? It didn't achieve anything; it was just an emotional gesture. But emotional gestures fascinate me more than ideological gestures.

In *Company Limited*, how far are you suggesting that the main character is essentially a product of bad social circumstances, rather than bad in himself?

It is certainly the system that makes him what he is. He's part of a bureaucratic and commercial machine, which has no place for one single man. If you want to live in a society, you immediately become part of the pattern, and that drives you into something you may not have been from the beginning. This man clearly has two sides: he has his private feelings and his conscience, but the system forces him to dissemble them

and to think only of his security and advancement. But it's an open film and it doesn't make any final statement.

If you nevertheless had to make a final statement about how to break up a system which distorts people, what would your solution be? You don't seem to have much faith in the revolutionary movement.

I can understand and admire Mao's revolution, which has completely changed China and achieved—at a cost—the eradication of poverty and illiteracy. But I don't think I could find a place in China, because I am still too much of an individual and I still believe too strongly in personal expression. Over the years, I have understood art as an expression of a creative personality, and I don't believe in the new theories which hold that art must be destroyed and doesn't need to be permanent. I believe in permanent values. That's my whole mental attitude, and I have to be true to myself. This doesn't mean that I don't sympathise with the young people, because I do... but at the same time I can see that when people grow beyond a certain age, they begin to have their own doubts. If something radical happens to you between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, then fine. If not, you are likely to become disillusioned as you grow older.

Is your personal background this rich, upper class milieu you describe and criticise in the new trilogy?

No, I've always stayed away from that sort of society. I have been very much of an observer and very solitary. The people who work with me on my films are close to me, but I have never been part of the group of people I describe. When I worked in advertising before making films, I had friends who were politically very active and supported the Soviet Union, but I have watched them grow over the years and they are now big executives in advertising firms. They don't talk much about their political position of the 1940s; but if they do, they try somehow to rationalise their development and their careers inside the system. I myself have been active as an artist, which is fine for me, although people say that I don't commit myself. Commitment to what? I commit myself to human beings, to making statements, and I think that is a good enough commitment for me.

The bombings one hears in *Company Limited*, from the big flat of the business man above Calcutta... are those explosions set off by left-wing groups?

Yes, and the irony is that very often they are caused by Left fighting Left. The tragedy is that the Left is split into so many groups, who are their own bitterest enemies. They don't fight the liberals or the conservatives. They don't attack the real targets, like the big industrialists, because they are afraid of losing. Instead, they attack each other.

You mentioned Glauber Rocha's cinema, which is usually considered as the political expression of the Third World on the screen. Coming from another part of the Third World, what do you think of his films?

I have never seen any of his films, because they are not shown in India. But I would really like to see them, because I understand that he is very powerful and outspoken. The young blood of cinema. Good!

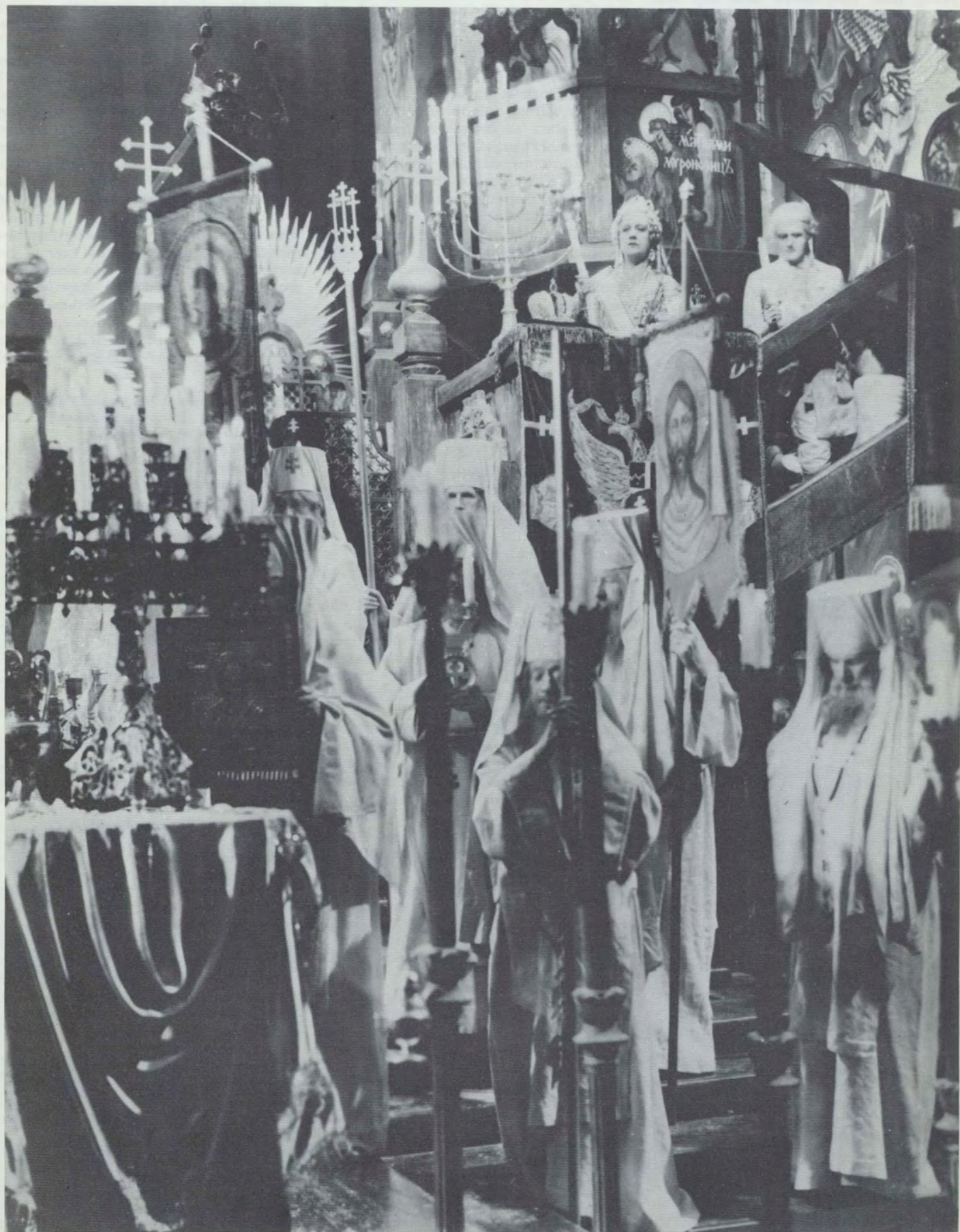


'The Adversary': Dhritiman Chatterji and hippies

executive husband was like. She's disheartened by what she finds, but on the other hand she is not so sure that she can go back to the revolutionary and marry him. She doesn't know how seriously involved with him she is. The brother-in-law asks her why she didn't tell him she had a boy friend. And she says: 'If there was anything, I would have told you.' She is in Calcutta because she had this great weakness for her brother-in-law, when she was a little girl in her teens. She hasn't seen him for six or seven years, and now that maybe he's such a success, let's see what he is like, whether he has completely changed or whether he is still a human being. Let's see if it's possible

JOSEF VON STERNBERG: THE SCIENTIST AND THE VAMP

Joyce Rheuban



Josef von Sternberg remains one of the most personal of film directors. A certain tension between reason and emotion, seemingly fundamental to his own personality, invariably informs his work. These two basic elements may be revealed by using Sternberg's own words, particularly in his autobiography *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, as a concordance to the images of his films: the words 'emotion', 'control' and 'conceal' or 'veil', which appear continually though in varied contexts, may serve as correlatives of his film style. Sternberg's words and films reveal an obsessive fascination with the inscrutability of human emotion and its ungovernable energy when touched off. In his narration to *Anatahan*, Sternberg remarks, 'We are ruled by dark forces about which we know nothing.' And, 'Typhoons in human beings strike without much warning.' He describes these forces as lurking within man beneath a composed surface. He refers to his subject, however, only in terms of control or concealment.

Between the lines of his autobiography and behind the images of the films, one may detect the constant contention of discipline versus indulgence; intellect versus faith or the inexplicable; civilisation versus the savage or exotic; and the tendency to conceal versus the tendency to reveal. Finally, there is the role of Sternberg as artist: 'scientist' versus 'vamp'. These roles are paralleled in the projections of himself in his characters, generally as man versus woman. Within Sternberg the artist and the man, the two sides seem to vie for ascendancy. In the films, these contradictory personal proclivities are externalised, personified to fight it out on the screen; and the conflict is expressed in erotic terms.

Sternberg's references to himself and his work seem at first hopelessly paradoxical. He repeatedly speaks of himself as a 'scientist' or 'surgeon' and his actors as his 'instruments', or the 'tools' of a 'master mechanic'. As a director, he claims the qualities of 'ice cold' emotional indifference, vigilance, objectivity, analysis, patience and control (defined as imposing order to create art from chaos). At the same time, he calls an act of creation 'a passionate prayer' and an 'act of love'. As a necessary ingredient in a work of art, he cites some mysterious and indefinable something which he finds elemental to everything in the universe. The films of this 'scientist' are as paradoxical as his words, in that they are highly subjective and emotionally highly charged.

Sternberg's work displays obsessively this tension between his volatile 'dark forces' and the imposition of rational control. He exhibits his fascination with the contention of reason versus emotion by working out the dynamic possibilities of their co-existence, both dramatically through his characters and visually in his treatment of the images. Confronting his preoccupation with emotion, Sternberg is threatened with the danger to his objective control and the possibility that, as artist, he may not be able to deal effectively with anything else. (His films of 'social significance', *An American Tragedy* and *Crime and Punishment*, are certainly well-crafted and interesting. They are, however, not nearly as beautiful, powerful or intriguing as those films in which his style finds freer expression as a manifestation of his temperament.) It is a paradox typical of Sternberg that the intention to control and conceal is subverted by its very application.

Dramatically, Sternberg conceals through ambiguity. He often purposely refuses to develop elements of characterisation, motivation or situation. Dialogue, particularly in

the films starring Dietrich, is conspicuously evasive, and delivery often stylised to a flat monotone. Large sections of the usually inconsequential plots are left to the viewer's imagination (as in the overlap dissolve transition in *Blonde Venus* from a shot of Dietrich ascending the stairs from the depths of a flop-house to the heights of fame as a Paris cabaret star). He makes misleading implications by suggestiveness of editing, or casually drops innuendoes by suggestiveness of dialogue and situation.

Another way to hide one's feelings is to laugh at them. Sternberg's sardonic sense of humour is ruthlessly unsparing. The resounding outburst of the impressionable young lieutenant who refuses to order the execution of Dietrich as a traitor in *Dishonoured* is merely an elaborate build-up for the punch line. As Dietrich stands before the wavering firing squad, she takes the opportunity to adjust her nylons and touch up her lipstick while the lieutenant's idealistic monologue is heard offscreen. *The Scarlet Empress* contains an extraordinary build-up to a very funny punch line. This is Sternberg's tracking shot to passionate violin music over the banquet table, littered with chewed bones and well-picked carcasses, on which the food is served up by figures of skeletons and emaciated martyrs. At the end of this stunning metaphor for the degeneracy of the Russian aristocracy, the camera settles on Louise Dresser as the tipsy Empress Elizabeth, crown cocked over one eye. She rises with some difficulty and announces to the company that she is retiring as she drunkenly wields a half-eaten chicken leg, until a courtier politely taps her on the shoulder and replaces it with her sceptre.

Sternberg conceals visually by means of intricate, diverting compositions of light and shadow, pattern and texture. He often literally 'veils' his images. He uses various textural and compositional elements and combinations of these elements placed before the camera—veils, streamers, nets, rain, smoke, glass, light and shadow. These are photographed by the distorting or diffusing devices of the camera itself—filters or gauze. The subject of a shot is often nearly obscured in shadow or silhouette, or is camouflaged behind foreground shapes or before a complementary background. The actors occasionally even wear face-masks. The effect of these various techniques of concealment, usually in some sort of combination in a single image, is further compounded as more than one such image fills the same frame in Sternberg's frequent use of long overlap dissolves.

What seems to have attracted Sternberg so irresistibly to his 'dark forces' is their mystery. It is interesting to note that ambiguity and abstraction are the means he uses to disguise his fascination with them. The dramatic and visual style he employs to conceal that with which he is impelled to deal actually results in an effect of emotionalisation. Indeed, he refers to his visual technique as an 'emotionalisation of space'. The very air is a conductor of the emotional charge. Rather than minimising the strength of attraction of the mysterious human drives with which he concerns himself, this style serves to enhance the effect of his subject on the viewer. Sternberg, the objective 'scientist' in theory, becomes Sternberg the 'vamp' in practice. He lures the viewer, tantalising him intellectually with the ambiguity of the narrative elements and seducing him sensually with the beauty of his images.

Sternberg is probably the cinema's biggest tease. He materialises this incredible vision in Dietrich and deliberately hides her behind veils, nets, masks, hats, fans, and any number of obstructions. In *Blonde Venus*, the theatrical agent asks Dietrich to show him 'what she's got'. As she raises her skirt to reveal her legs, Sternberg cuts to shoot the scene from behind a desk, completely blocking the famous Dietrich legs. When not obscured by a desk, Dietrich's figure is often hidden beneath a man's suit. Sternberg, of course, realised just how this affected her appeal. The sensuousness resulting from his various means of concealment is perhaps most irresistibly exciting in several orgies of visual delights: the 'Devil's carnival' of *Underworld*, the masquerade ball of *Dishonoured*, the Spanish carnival in *The Devil Is a Woman*, even the Chinese New Year celebration of *The Shanghai Gesture*.

Sternberg never exploits blatant sex or violence (as he could well have done in the pre-Code films), or maudlin sentimentality. He rather conveys an impression which is much more subtly and potentially communicative of sensual excitement or deep feeling. This is attributable to the intensity of his emotional involvement in the creation of the images. In *Dishonoured*, for example, the kiss between 'X-27' (Dietrich) and the captive enemy agent (Victor McLaglen) is seen in silhouette against a translucent background wall of frosted windows which bursts out in a dazzling play of light from the spotlights of the airfield outside. Similarly, the seduction of Hui Fei by Chang in her train compartment in *Shanghai Express* is provocatively played out in shadow and silhouette behind shifting shades and sliding doors.

In *Blonde Venus*, Dietrich's marital and romantic relationships appear rather austere, and the customary sentiment called for by the mother love-confession drama plot seems lacking. Yet Sternberg's emotionalising style actually imbues the film with profounder sensations than its stereotype formula merits. Though Herbert Marshall and Dietrich, as his wife, rarely touch, and kiss briefly only once in the film, Sternberg includes a long sequence of Marshall's departure on an ocean liner from wife and child in lingering, lyrical overlap dissolves. Or there are the extraordinarily exotic scenes in gauze-diffused, high-key lighting of a

ramshackle courtyard in rural Texas into which, heralded by fluttering white and speckled birds, Dietrich enters to entice the detective tracking her. The lush primitivism and rhythmic pace of the 'Hot Voodoo' musical number in *Blonde Venus*, shot through the dark outlines of overhanging palm branches, exert a strong sensual appeal. Even in *Jet Pilot* (Sternberg's only colour film), he subversively enters a gloriously lyrical sequence of metaphorical love-making by two jet planes soaring at supersonic speeds in a stratosphere of sparkling blue.

In moments of highest emotional pitch for the characters, Sternberg allows little of their outright reactions actually to be seen. But a paradoxically emotional effect is achieved by this obscuring of any direct expression of feeling. When Shanghai Lily in *Shanghai Express* enters her train compartment to pray for the safety of the man she loves, she turns out the light and only her hands are visible, eloquently spotlighted in the darkness. In the close-up of Dietrich in the wedding sequence of *The Scarlet Empress*, Sternberg focuses on the texture of the sheer veil covering her face. What the veil and her impassive expression conceal of her intense feelings at her wedding to the royal idiot, Peter, the flickering flame of the candle before her face reveals, as she steals glances from Count Alexei. And, at each increasingly Satanic instance of Concha's humiliation of Pasqual in *The Devil Is a Woman*, Sternberg implies that the intensity of the sado-masochistic passion aroused in him can only be imagined. Sternberg cuts at these moments to close-ups of Atwill, repeatedly shadowing the upper half of his face.

In most of the films with Dietrich, the only occasions that impress the spectator with their naturalism, against the abstraction of their highly stylised backgrounds, are the rare moments of straightforward passion, which burst like a 'typhoon' through the composed surfaces of character and screen. Even then, Sternberg quickly restrains their expression. In *Morocco*, Dietrich reveals how much she cares for Cooper, and how deeply she is hurt by his desertion, by throwing her glass of champagne at the mirror upon which Legionnaire Brown has left his farewell message. As soon as her arm lets go of the glass, however, she pulls it back and turns away from Menjou with her arms locked in front of her.

Sternberg will sublimate a glimpse of an unobscured emotional expression into an impression. In *Blonde Venus*, Dietrich, banished by her husband for her infidelity, returns after a long separation to see her child. In the final scene, Marshall and Dietrich gaze at each other longingly in rare, unobstructed close-ups until he finally moves from the opposite end of the crib to stand by her side. Just as they come together, Sternberg cuts away and translates the emotion of this moment into a divertingly beautiful abstract image of harmony—the heavily gauzed, softly luminescent close-up of the child's hand at the rotating toy figures of a music-box as its gentle lullaby is heard over the image. (This is actually quite an outrageous departure from the obligatory, often hysterical, scene of penitence, forgiveness and reconciliation called for by the confession-melodrama plot.)



'Dishonoured' (1931): Dietrich with Gustav von Seyffertitz. Below: 'Blonde Venus' (1932)



It would appear that Sternberg gives himself away in spite of himself: what most concerns him is precisely that upon which he lavishes his elaborate and loving attentions to conceal. It is more likely, however, that our ultimate discovery of him is as he intended. In his lifetime, he put on an enigmatic mask to the world, though in his work he lures and captivates one with the beautiful mystery of his veils. This Sternberg, the 'vamp', teases in his book just as he does in his films, almost daring the reader to try to uncover his true identity. The title for his autobiography was originally *A Guide to a Labyrinth*. Sternberg taunts the reader near the beginning of the book by assuring him that what has most affected him is not even mentioned. He defines his cinematic philo-

sophy as one which poses problems without ever offering solutions. Yet at the same time, Sternberg says it's all there, and invites the reader into the mysterious recesses of the two labyrinths—book and films—in search of him: 'To my students my work may have already disclosed all there is to say. For the plastic medium of motion pictures, though new, tells an old story, and no matter how concealed the purpose of a story, it is at all times indicative of its author.'

It is possible that Sternberg's book was prompted by his observation that perhaps he had disguised himself too well. That other inner need to reveal himself seems to have led him, in *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, to reclaim the emotions of his films as his own. He points out the absurdity of the fame and



'Morocco' (1930): Dietrich with Paul Porcasi. Below: 'The Devil Is a Woman' (1935)



fortune showered upon his performers for the emotions that were his. He repeatedly rails against the vulgar masses who never saw, or cared to see, beneath the films' surfaces; and against the players, his 'puppets', who he claims could never see beyond themselves.

In the erotic relationships in the films between man and woman, Sternberg dramatically externalises that tension within himself between reason and emotion. The leading characters generally correspond to the two sides of this dichotomy—that is, 'scientist' and 'vamp'. Both characters are Sternberg nevertheless. It is therefore understandable that their relationships are always, at one point or another, relationships of conflict.

'Scientist' is a general term which refers in this context to the character who subscribes to some sort of discipline. This character, usually the leading man, metaphorically represents the tendency in Sternberg towards reason, control, intellect and civilisation. Most of Sternberg's male characters do subscribe to some discipline, formal or informal. Clive Brook in *Underworld* is an erudite and verbose ex-attorney; Emil Jannings in *The Blue Angel* plays a pedantic professor; Adolphe Menjou in *Morocco* is a worldly gentleman who subscribes to a personal code of honour and decorous behaviour, while Gary Cooper subscribes to a military discipline; as do Brook in *Shanghai Express*, McLaglen and Oland in *Dis-honoured*, Atwill in *The Devil Is a Woman*,

Jannings in *The Last Command*, John Lodge in *The Scarlet Empress*, John Wayne in *Jet Pilot*, and the shipwrecked seamen of *Anatahan*. Brook is a surgeon as well as a British army captain in *Shanghai Express*; Herbert Marshall is a research scientist in *Blonde Venus*; and in *The Shanghai Gesture*, Victor Mature is 'Doctor Omar', the 'Doctor of Nothing', while Walter Huston is the efficient British colonial official.

Woman in Sternberg's films may be seen as the metaphorical externalisation of his 'dark forces'—those unruly tendencies that reside beneath a civilised surface. This woman is therefore essentially a being of charming beauty and irresistible mystery who can never be fully comprehended by the intellect. She is also potentially dangerous, because her powers are ungoverned and ungovernable by rational control. Sternberg fashions her as a stimulus to man's primitive desires and animal impulses and, at the same time, the very incarnation of those desires and impulses—elemental, pagan, exotic.

In *The Blue Angel*, Dietrich is a predatory animal who lives on love, ever on the prowl for prey. It is merely her nature, and no constraints of morality or conscience bind her. Her theme song is: 'Falling in Love Again/Love's always been my game/Play it how I may/I was made that way/Can't help it.' Even her name, which Sternberg changed from the novel's 'Rosa Frölich' to 'Lola-Lola', connotes a primitive incantation. The same sort of feminine atavism is present in the more stylised 'Hot Voodoo' musical number of *Blonde Venus*, in which Dietrich actually assumes the form of an ape. (The songs and numbers in Sternberg's films with Dietrich are always relevant.)

Sternberg seems on the one hand to acknowledge the natural place of this woman as a vital, healthy force in the often unnaturally well-ordered and lifeless existence of his male characters. Lola-Lola at first takes the place for Professor Rath of his dead canary. He is initially engaged by Lola as he blows on her feather skirt on the confiscated postcards. Later, he wakes up in Lola's room to her canary's singing as she cheerfully serves his morning coffee.

The male character has usually denied himself any such breath of life for so long that he is particularly susceptible to the excitement and pleasure of this charming creature's sudden presence. She becomes Eve, introducing or re-introducing him to the fruit of the Tree of Life. In *Morocco*, Dietrich introduces herself to Legionnaire Brown (Cooper) by offering him an apple, which we see him eagerly chew in close-up. He watches her and smiles, discovering the room key she has placed in his hand. This is just where the trouble starts for Sternberg's hero. He gets foolishly carried away, loses control, and forgets obedience to the law (whatever law Sternberg's male character subscribes to). Lola reaches in and leads Rath out of his little study piled high with books. 'Feathers' McCoy (Evelyn Brent), another 'canary', stimulates Brook as the ineffectual bookworm in *Underworld* to activity and passion. In both films, however, this birdlike creature is not so harmless. From simple disorder, her presence in the male characters' lives comes to mean trouble, danger, and eventually death.

From his entrance into 'The Blue Angel',

Rath is in a constant state of bewilderment, disorientation or dishevelment in the foreign milieu of Lola's world of cheap sensuality, and in her presence. He eventually loses his position at the school and his standing in the community; while, increasingly, he is now seen below Dietrich spatially. Soon he loses his self-respect and, finally, all self-control in the mad rage which leads to his collapse. Dramatically more subtle and of less drastic consequence is the way Dietrich disrupts, with a broken string of pearls, the stuffy decorum of the engagement dinner party Menjou gives in *Morocco*.

Even though the presence of Woman in Sternberg's films always means at least trouble for the male character, Sternberg nevertheless seems as often (if less overtly) to concede the naturalness of a union between his figurative beings. Pursuing the Biblical analogy, it should be recalled that Eve came from within Adam. Commenting on the departure of the one woman whose presence on an isolated island of men was fatal to half a dozen of them, Sternberg recites in *Anatahan*: 'Keiko had gone—there was no more trouble—there was also no more life.' The elements in man that, when aroused, Sternberg declares reduce him to the level of a savage, he also conversely calls that which 'distinguishes man from lifeless matter.' Brook and Dietrich are finally reconciled in the scene in the railway station in *Shanghai Express*, though Captain Harvey still complains, 'How the devil can I kiss you with all these people around?' Dietrich answers by putting her arms round his neck and kissing him, as she drops his gloves and crouches behind his back. Even in *The Devil Is a Woman*, after Concha is responsible for having her hopelessly captivated lover, Don Pasqual, nearly killed, she leaves the man for whom he has sacrificed himself to return at the last moment to the probably dying Pasqual.

Eve evolves into 'Vamp' (often within a film as well as over the chronological course of Sternberg's films). Sternberg frequently appropriates conventions of the dated vamp-melodrama genre. Seeking the sanctuary of parody, he disguises with derision the sincerity of his metaphorical identification with the characters. Sternberg's variations on the ritual of the 'toilette' parody the archetypal vamp's fetish for personal hygiene and grooming. In *The Blue Angel*, this routine serves as an important feature of Lola's backstage repertoire, with the aid of which she enraptures the unwary Professor. Physical degeneration of the vamp's defenceless victim, ridiculously exaggerated in the landmark 'vamp' film, *A Fool There Was*, is nearly as obvious in *The Blue Angel* and *The Devil Is a Woman* (whose plots are basically of the vamp-melodrama genre). Near the end of *The Blue Angel*, in fact, Rath is commanded by Lola as if he were a zombie with no will of his own.

Sternberg's own version of the prototype movie vamp is, however, not so much the broadly characterised temptress who sets out to lure, seduce, humiliate and eventually destroy a man just for the fun and profit of it. She is rather the more passive, but highly persuasive, stimulus for the male character to destroy himself. Her irresistible attraction depends as much on the man's particular vulnerability as on her specific charms. This is why most of Sternberg's 'heroes' are of a

common type. Because of their inhibitions or previous self-denial, they are all the more susceptible to seduction, and often beyond that to hopeless, irrational obsession. Man, the 'scientist', is minus; Woman, the 'vamp' is plus. Opposites attract.

It is of interest to observe the fatalistic way in which characters of such different ways of life and temperament inevitably gravitate towards one another in Sternberg's films. Since both characters personify aspects of a single personality (Sternberg's), their attraction to each other over vast and small expanses of space and time might be interpreted metaphorically as Sternberg's 'split personality' seeking completion. On the other hand, if this union does not result in disgrace for the male character, there is always the conflict and tension which hinders its progress throughout the film.

In *Underworld*, the dissipated lawyer tells the gangster's moll that he's not interested in women, with a gesture of aloof dignity which only Clive Brook can execute. They each retire with a book (hers is upside down) to opposite sides of the room. Soon, however, each looks simultaneously over at the other. Sternberg cuts from close-ups to a long shot of the room as they rise to meet in the middle and, finally, kiss. This same magnetic attraction reaches across the greater distance between ship and shore at the conclusion of *The Docks of New York*, as George Bancroft climbs out of the hold of his ship and dives into the sea to swim back to Betty Compson, to whom he thought he had said goodbye.

From the moment Professor Rath clandestinely plays with the contraband postcards of Lola-Lola in his study (a scene which is cut to a close-up of the cards in his hand in most commercially distributed prints of *The Blue Angel*), he is irresistibly drawn to her. In a very imaginative sound transition, particularly for this very early sound film, Lola beckons him with her singing as the sound of the following shot of her on stage is briefly heard over the preceding shot of Rath in his study. He leaves to go to 'The Blue Angel', ostensibly to make sure his students no longer frequent the place. Crossing the distance between his rooms and the club is like a descent into the maelstrom. As he proceeds along the dim and narrow streets, an ominous foghorn is heard and a harsh-looking streetwalker suddenly materialises out of the darkness. Mocking laughter (echoed later in the musical punctuations of the scenes in Lola's dressing-room) follows him into the night. Later a black cat crosses his path. As soon as he extricates himself from the netting in which he has immediately become caught on entering the club, he is suddenly spotlighted in the crowd to compound his confusion as Lola turns the light on him from the stage. She sings 'ein richtigen Mann', as the audience laughs at the bewildered Professor. The whole drama is contained and foretold in this scene, as she unhesitatingly singles out Rath in the darkness. Later, the melancholy clown (the ever-present, silent omen of Rath's fate) is seen gazing in adoration as Lola sings from the stage up to Rath, who is sitting in a box above in the place of honour. A gradual pan shot up from the clown, past the voluptuous figurehead which supports the box, finally comes to rest on Rath, establishing the fateful con-

nection between the two men.

In the opening scene on the ship in *Morocco*, Menjou is first drawn to Dietrich through dark night and dense fog as if guided by radar. Fate itself is the agent by which Dietrich is introduced in *Dishonoured* to her prospective victim, the enemy agent played by McLaglen. She persuades him to bet at the roulette table on the number she suggests and wagers a kiss against his loss. The roulette wheel obliges with another number, which brings McLaglen to her to collect his kiss. In *The Devil Is a Woman*, Don Pasqual and Concha Perez gravitate towards each other as surely as opposite magnetic poles.

By imposing resistance to the instinctual attraction he has created between his characters, Sternberg communicates an almost electric emotional tension (or the release of that tension, as in the final sequence of *Morocco*). One such instance is that of the first kiss between Brook and Dietrich in *Shanghai Express* since their stubborn separation of thousands of miles and several years. The moment is, typically, impressionistically rather than graphically illustrated. Brook slowly draws nearer to her, narrowing the distance to the now small space and time between the meeting of their lips, on the windblown observation car as the train speeds through the night. At the instant their lips meet, Sternberg cuts away to the train whistle which we see and hear blowing off steam as a metaphor for the liberation of long suppressed passion. He then cuts to a long shot of the train as the mailbag is snapped off its hook before he cuts back to catch the finish of the kiss.

The blood relationship of Sternberg's 'vamp' to her prototype, dangerous by nature and evil as a matter of course, may be seen in his oblique and tenuous images of woman as, variously, black widow spider, black cat, or the ultimate *femme fatale*—Death itself. Sternberg's dangerous women are most often dressed, seductively but ominously, in black. In *The Blue Angel*, Lola-Lola sings, 'Old men, Young men, All fall into my net.' Sternberg's male characters are constantly being trapped, actually and figuratively, in delicate nets and veils. Passion and violence are played out against a surface textured by them. The black cat is initially identified with Woman in his first film, *The Salvation Hunters*. The single image which best signifies his incarnation of his intriguing but deadly 'dark forces' is the remarkable superimposition in *Dishonoured* of Dietrich's face over a shot of her black cat. The separate shots are indistinguishable as they merge to create the single image of a strange but beautiful creature—half human, half feline. The creature's mysterious beauty simultaneously suggests its dangerous significance; the implication of danger, in turn, enhances its beauty.

The inevitable connection of beauty with danger in Sternberg's *Woman* leads unavoidably to the motifs (again paradoxical) of love and hate and love and death. The love/hate motif is expressed primarily in the man's self-destructive response of intensified attraction as the 'vamp' becomes more dangerous, more powerful and sadistic. Lola's song in *The Blue Angel* warns, 'Beware of Blonde Women', with its admonition, 'You are courting danger.' The obviously



Sam Jaffe amid the stylised sets of *'The Scarlet Empress'* (1934)

sado-masochistic attraction between Concha and Don Pasqual is a far cry from, but nevertheless a direct descendant of, the initial merely pleasantly disturbing excitement of dormant feelings. After 'courting danger', one mates with death. Immediately after meeting Dietrich in *Dishonoured*, McLaglen feels he must tell her, 'I see Death as a beautiful woman wearing flowers.' In *Shanghai Express*, Dietrich is 'Shanghai Lily—the notorious white flower of China . . . who's wrecked the lives of a dozen men up and down the China coast.' Sternberg narrates also in *Anatahan*: 'Death was fishing in this jungle and on his hook as bait he dangled Keiko.' And, in a scene preserved in the rushes of the unfinished *I Claudius*, the demented Emperor Caligula pronounces to Claudius, 'I sentence you to death in the most beautiful possible way.' Claudius' sentence is marriage to Messalina.

Extraordinary as Sternberg's 'vamp' is, his female characterisation transcends this superficial classification. She becomes a sort of Superwoman, incredibly potent in the combination of feminine beauty and charm with the strength of a man. Sternberg's 'Lesbian accents', including Dietrich's frequent adoption of masculine attire and mannerisms, in addition to enhancing her aura of ambiguity, may also be explained as a suggestion of her omni-sexuality. This is appropriate for Sternberg's heroine, since this is not really a woman of flesh and blood but an externalisation best personified in the feminine form of something within Sternberg himself. This hypothesis would also justify the stylised similarity of the delivery of dialogue between man and woman in the love scenes, in the films with Dietrich particularly, as well as the physical austerity of the relationships in his films.

The woman is generally at least an equal match for the man in the conflict at hand between reason and emotion. The characters

often set out at the beginning of a film as in a contest, by shaking hands or sizing each other up with a glance. Often this Superwoman is stronger than the man, since she has access to additional weapons. (It may be noted that after Lola destroys the Professor in *The Blue Angel*, she takes on no less an opponent than Mazeppa, the Strong Man.) In *Dishonoured*, McLaglen does not mind so much being captured by 'X-27', for this is 'all in the game', as he does the means she employs. He tells her, 'You trick men into death with your body . . . You put something into war that doesn't belong there. If I stay, I'm not only in danger of losing my life but of falling in love with you, you devil.'

For this extraordinary woman, sexual power is translated into military and political power. The motif of love and war in Sternberg's films relates of course to that of love and hate and love and death. Menjou describes his engagement to Dietrich in *Morocco* as 'the unconditional surrender of the most exacting bachelor in the world.' Oland, the traitor, surrenders his sword to the seductive spy in *Dishonoured*; Dietrich and Brook compare 'medals' in *Shanghai Express*; Catherine 'adds the Army to her list of conquests' in *The Scarlet Empress*. Correspondingly, in *Anatahan* Sternberg talks of his 'dark forces' in similar terms: 'How could we know that we brought the enemy with us—in our own bodies. An enemy that would attack without notice.'

For a director as personal as Sternberg, all the preoccupations and motifs that we see in his films are intricately and inextricably related to the way he shows them to us—that is, his style. We have attempted therefore to decipher what is behind the images by keeping in mind the code of the style in which he presents them. The cinematic evolution of Sternberg's Woman and her relationships with the male characters may

serve thereby as an index to the condition of his own psychological and artistic relationship to the tendencies the characters embody. A particularly convenient case study in an assessment of this evolution is that of Marlene Dietrich.

Sternberg was at first delighted with Dietrich as a 'perfect medium'; he describes her as the most malleable and manipulated of his creative materials. Perhaps he also recognised (as he seems to have done immediately) her likeness to himself. He admits having been struck initially by her inclination to 'jeer at herself and at others', her air of 'cold disdain', 'impressive poise', 'indifference' and 'apathy'. Yet Sternberg must have detected the promise of an inner fire beneath that enigmatic exterior. He knew exactly what he wanted in the women of his films before and after his personal and professional relationship with Dietrich. Dietrich was exactly what Sternberg wanted.

As far as Sternberg was concerned, Dietrich may have proven too perfect a vessel for what he felt the need to express. He reveals at times the feeling that he was tempted by the extraordinary opportunity she offered into an obsessive fixation for using her to express those 'dark' forces, and to dramatise the psychic tension of his relationship to them. He perhaps felt that in succumbing to the temptation of a perfect medium (Dietrich) for the projection of his personal preoccupations, he had lost the objective control he theoretically insisted on and, with it, the ability to apply himself artistically to other themes. To Sternberg, Dietrich seems to have taken on the ominous proportions of the classical Expressionist 'Vampire'—the parasitic force in the form of a beautiful woman who drains the hopelessly fascinated artist of his life and creativity.

Sternberg's accounts of his own actual artistic association with Dietrich, and the parallel fantasy projections of 'scientist' and 'vamp' of his films, coincide quite obligingly at times. He relates that from his third film with Dietrich he repeatedly attempted to terminate their professional association. 'I had made up my mind to stop painting the lily, and I told her so. But I had not anticipated her reaction.' Each time, it seems, the 'puppet' begged him to pull her strings once more.

Four films after Sternberg says he first expressed his desire to discontinue working with her, Lionel Atwill (his virtual double), as Don Pasqual in the last film with Dietrich, says of his relationship with Concha Perez: 'There were only two ways out—either leave her or kill her. I chose a third.' The fatalistic attraction of his male characters to the alluring mysteries the Dietrich character represents corresponds to Sternberg's own inability to say 'No'—less to Dietrich herself than to the 'perfect medium' she offered.

His protestations offscreen against being forced to 'plagiarise' himself become suspect when one sees the seven films in which he lavished his unsparing attentions to create this 'alluring enigma'. Analogously in *The Devil Is a Woman*, Atwill rails against Concha Perez in the framing story as he relates the sad account of his downfall at her hands to his young friend (Cesar Romero). As Atwill's forbidding recollections dissolve into the flashback, the audience learns that

he warns Romero against her because she still desires her himself. Atwill introduces one episode by noting that he was called officially to a certain city, adding, 'And it was my bad luck to run into her once more.' Into the flashback itself, we find Pasqual sitting in the café where Concha is singing. As she hears him, he grabs her hand and pleads with her, admitting, 'I've looked for you so long.'

Sternberg as the objective 'scientist' claims in his autobiography that he proposed in his films (though 'touched on lightly' in most) to warn the viewer of the danger of unguided emotions, and maintains that 'art can serve to remind man that he is no longer a savage.' But how is this to be done when he himself refers to his cinematic creation of Dietrich as a 'pictorial aphrodisiac'? Like Professor Rath, blissful accessory to his own destruction by eagerly serving Lola in the application of her make-up, Sternberg paints her irresistibly. The more beautiful she becomes, the more dangerous, and vice versa. When Don Pasqual warns his friend against Concha he tells him, 'She's the most dangerous woman you'll ever meet.' If anything, this sends Romero directly to her.

The prolonged association with Dietrich eventually brings critics to refer to Sternberg with epithets such as 'a fool for femmes'. This was perhaps too close for comfort to his own apprehensions about objective control giving way to subjective indulgence. As the tension between reason and emotion seems to have increased while working with Dietrich, so does the correlative tension between revealing and concealing. Sternberg seems to reinforce his defences in the last films with Dietrich by 'completely subjecting' his 'bird of paradise' to his camouflaging stylisation of visual treatment, dramatic ambiguity and absurd, self-mocking humour.

Analogous to Don Pasqual's self-defeating warning to Romero against Concha is Sternberg's increased stylisation in these two films: *The Scarlet Empress* and *The Devil Is a Woman*. He only further enhances his Superwoman's fascination for the viewer, and her lethal power in the contexts of the films. As Catherine tells the Archimandrite, 'I have ways far more powerful than any political machine.' With Catherine's exhilarating ascent up the palace steps, Sternberg's 'vamp' is raised to a position of unparalleled political and sexual potency. She is a lascivious fiend in the final shot at the head of the stairs—dressed in a cavalry uniform, posed in a two-shot with her stallion. Sternberg's allusion to Catherine's purported sodomous inclinations (among others in the film) implies here that the stallion is now her only suitable mate. The harmless 'canary' has become, in *The Scarlet Empress*, the monstrous two-headed eagle which looms ferociously over the Imperial throne.

From *The Scarlet Empress*, the isolated moments of naturalistically identifiable emotion which occasionally punctuated the stylised surfaces of previous films with Dietrich are presented now as perversity, parody, or even burlesque. Characterisations become even more highly abstracted or are outright caricatures (as is Ruthelma Stevens as Peter's malevolently mugging mistress, Catherine's 'rival'). The players are frequently lost in the decor. Sternberg's humour in this film is very dark indeed.

From *Angel to Devil*, the foreshadowing figure of the melancholy clown becomes the goose Concha holds as Pasqual holds her in their first confrontation. The vital creature that Dietrich is in Lola, responding without inhibition to her natural desires, becomes the sadistic devil, Concha Perez, who acts ruthlessly upon her perverse impulses. Sternberg seems to have found himself somewhat in the unfortunate position of Dr. Jekyll, that scientist who, after succeeding in isolating the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of his personality, finally becomes completely overwhelmed by the monstrous Mr. Hyde.

If the films' stylistic development charts for us the pressures of Sternberg's psychic tensions, then the appearance of dolls in the images of these films provides a running commentary to this development. He seems to try to assure himself of his autonomy over his 'puppets' (his actors) by frequently placing all sorts of dolls in the hands or at the mercy of the curious or vengeful male characters. Although in *Devil*, Atwill woe-fully tells Romero of his experience with Concha as he holds up a cardboard toy man and makes it dance. (*The Devil Is a Woman* is an adaptation of a novel called *Woman and Puppet*, and a remake of a 'vamp' film of 1920 of the same name.) Correspondingly, in *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, a discussion of Sternberg's working relationship with Dietrich begins in terms of her 'slavery' and total 'submission' to his will as director. He concludes this chapter: 'I had ended a period of servitude.'

As Pasqual relates the misleading framing narration in *The Devil Is a Woman* to conceal from Romero his own emotional involvement with Concha, an added dimension thereby removes the viewer from the illusion of the story. One must consider not only the story itself, but also the intentions of he who tells it. The stylistic defences and deceptions Sternberg employs, also as storyteller, for concealing his own involvement in the images add a modernist dimen-

sion to his work. A psychological depth extends beyond the surface of the screen to engage the spectator's intellectual participation. He must extricate the significance of a level of meaning beyond that of relating the narrative. Therefore, *The Devil Is a Woman*, which Andrew Sarris has referred to as Sternberg's 'coldest film', is perhaps his most distinctly personal.

The artist seeks and invents his own original modes of self-expression to meet the demands of his imagination. Sternberg's Expressionism was too far ahead of its time for most of his audience and critics. Many of his films were tremendously popular. However, the bewildered reactions to one of his two most thoroughly modernist works, *The Scarlet Empress*, is evidence that popular—and for the most part critical—approval of his films depended on their most superficial entertainment appeal. *The Devil Is a Woman*, withdrawn from distribution shortly after its release and not even seen again commercially until recently, is generally misunderstood and berated ('dull stupidity') by critics and scholars even today. New and unconventional approaches and techniques are to be found in all Sternberg's previous and subsequent surviving films, but *The Scarlet Empress* and *Devil* are relentlessly executed in modernist terms; according to an aesthetic strategy which functions as a direct expression of the artist's consciousness.

It is easy to imagine how anarchic these two films must have seemed at the time of their realisation (as they still are). Sternberg had conceived a most original stylistic strategy to accommodate that inner tension between revealing and concealing his peculiar preoccupations. These films represent the hyperbolic extensions of this strategy—one characterised by ambiguity, dramatic and visual abstraction and dehierarchisation, an indiscriminate mixture of genres, and black and absurdist humour.

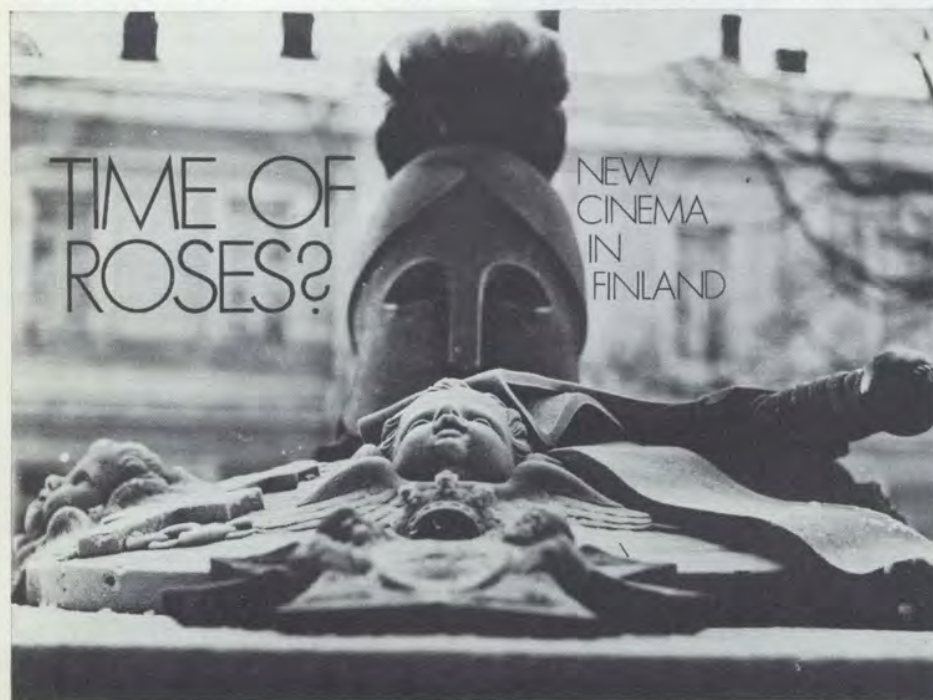
In the essentially 'vamp' formula plot and characterisations of *Anatahan*, Sternberg's last film, may be seen yet another restatement of the same preoccupations. His purported aim is an 'experiment . . . to alert all of us . . . to the necessity of reinvestigating our emotions and the reliability of our controls.' However, his warning in *Anatahan* is relatively free of the diverting stylisation of concealment typical of previous films. Sternberg's 'didactic' intentions are better served in *Anatahan*—a film without the customary elliptical traps, cryptic ambiguities and mysterious charm of the enigmatic. *Anatahan* represents the work of a Sternberg relieved of the heightened tension of having to contend (in his own inimitable and captivating fashion) with his infatuation with Dietrich as a dangerously 'too perfect' medium for the expression of a subjective obsession. The labyrinthine abysses of the often outrageous, always beautiful style in which Sternberg's intellectual discipline demanded he dress his emotional indulgence, most dynamically expressed in the series of films with Dietrich, are more intriguing and exciting. In their extraordinarily direct communication of this quintessential quality of tension, these films best express the sensibility and personality of Josef von Sternberg. There are few subjects more intriguing and exciting than Sternberg himself. ■

Sternberg before Dietrich: 'Exquisite Sinner' (1926)



It is hardly surprising that relatively little is known about the Finnish cinema, since Jörn Donner is the only film-maker whose work has been seen outside Finland on any scale. Donner's article about himself in *SIGHT AND SOUND* ('After Six Films', in the Spring 1970 issue) rather undervalued other Finnish films, to judge from a recent National Film Theatre season which included work by directors like Risto Jarva, Jaakko Pakkasvirta and Mikko Niskanen.

Finland's cinema has existed since 1904, and has been in continuous production since the 1920s; at the industry's height, in the 1940s and 1950s, as many as twenty-five feature films were produced annually, a very high figure for a country of only four and a half million people. Yet in Britain the only reasonably well known Finnish film, until the late 1960s brought Niskanen's *Under Your Skin* and Donner's films (*Black on White*, *Sixty-nine* and *Portraits of Women*), was the veteran Edvin Laine's sympathetic but clumsy *The Unknown Soldier* (1955). Now that we have been introduced to the new Finnish cinema, it is to be hoped that we may have a chance some time to see more of the traditional one—films by Erkki Karu from the silent period, by Teuvo Tulio from the 1940s and Matti Kassila from the 1950s, and probably most important, the films of Nyrki Tapiovaara, a socialist who made five films in the late 1930s before being killed, at the age of 29, in Finland's 'Winter War' with Russia.



'Viapori—Castle of Finland'

Jim Hillier

Finland is not really part of Scandinavia, although it has a large Swedish-speaking minority; it is not quite the rather less developed Sweden one is sometimes led to expect, although there are parallels. Finland is still in the middle of the difficult transition from a mainly agrarian to a mainly urban society; but while many Finns would like their country to go precisely the way of Sweden, many others reject Swedish bourgeois socialism. Poised between East and West, the Soviet Union on one side and Sweden on the other, Finnish society is often polarised. There is a great deal of economic, political and cultural contact with Russia; and, although this may have been forced on the country by geography and the results of the Second World War, for large sections of the population the contact is very genuine. Almost certainly, though, more Finns look to the West than to the East for economic salvation, a social system and a cultural identity. Nevertheless, Finnish society is politically deeply divided.

It offers an initial definition of the new

cinema if one says that very few of the country's problems or divisions were evident in the traditional cinema (which even at its best usually specialised in literary adaptations, rural films and domestic comedies), while the themes of the new cinema give a very good idea of some of the more pressing issues currently under debate: work, housing and urban life in general, class, political and historical divisions, the status of women, alcohol, problems of rural life. Even so, the overtly political-social aspect of the new films represents only one emphasis, though probably the most important one. Donner must be counted among the new cinema men, and so must Niskanen, but neither works from an explicitly political commitment. Donner's work derives more from a Swedish tradition of personal, moral exploration, while Niskanen recognises a debt to an older Finnish tradition (Tapiovaara and Tulio, for example), of which a director such as Jarva admits to knowing almost nothing.

Mainstream Finnish cinema all but died

a few years ago, because of overproduction, competition from television and a prolonged actors' strike. Production fell from twenty-one features in 1962 to only three in 1967. At the same time younger directors like Jarva, Pakkasvirta, Niskanen and Erkki Kivikoski—many of them schooled like Tapiovaara before them in the film club movement—were making their first films. Maunu Kurkvaara had shown the way in the late 1950s by working independently of the big companies, and most of the new film-makers worked in small, independent production groups, helped along by the recently instituted state prizes for quality. The beginning of a recognisably new cinema can be located in 1965 with Jarva's first solo feature *Game of Chance*, followed a year later by Niskanen's *Under Your Skin*, both films concerned with the problems of young people and both owing a good deal to the styles and subjects of the French New Wave.

These films represented a noticeable break from the more weighty and traditional conventions; but as far as political content is concerned a more important date was 1967, which saw Jarva's first really mature film, *A Worker's Diary*. In 1966 a Popular Front government was formed, which for the first time included Communists. This event, which concretised the increasing leftward trend of Finnish life throughout the 1960s, gave added impetus to left wing film-makers who were just beginning to find their feet; they now had a real context in which to work. Jarva himself is very aware both of general influences and of the change in his own work after 1966: 'The subjects and styles of expression of films have been remarkably affected by the powerful social consciousness which began its growth in the 1960s.'

A Worker's Diary is a crucial film, since in both style and content it set the tone for much that followed. The film, which describes the progress of the marriage of Juhani and Ritva, is in four parts: The Wedding (Marriage Across Class Divisions); Juhani (Not by Bread Alone); Ritva (Not by Love Alone); Ritva and Juhani. The fine basic love story is continually crossed and affected by other themes: class differences (Juhani is a worker, Ritva is middle-class) and, stemming from them, political divisions; work (the marriage begins to go wrong when Juhani has to move away to work and cope with new responsibilities); housing, and so on. Jarva insists on the social dimension of the love story, breaking up his narrative by juxtaposing naturalistic sequences with charts and statistics (about housing, for instance) and also imagined sequences (Juhani's father forced to kill a baby whose mother has died, caught between the lines in the Winter War). The fusing of the two strands is very successful: one understands both the private emotions and the social pressures and needs which help to define them. At the end of the film Ritva's alienation is overcome, after a foetus has died in her womb. Attitudes and suspicions from the past can be left behind, and Ritva and Juhani can begin again.

Finnish critics are constantly asking their country's cinema to confront the reality of Finland, to reveal the social, economic and cultural structures in society. Jarva's

effort to answer this call was followed up by many later films. In part, this meant providing a critical alternative to accepted views of Finnish life. Thus *The Green Widow* (1968), the first solo feature by Jarva's colleague Jaakko Pakkasvirta, is set in the Helsinki garden suburb of Tapiola, much vaunted as a social and architectural success. It shows a woman 'widowed' and alienated by suburban life and her confinement to flat and children; but since suburbia is only a consequence of a kind of social thinking which manifests itself in other ways, *The Green Widow* is a critique of society in general. The leading character is shown slowly disintegrating, trying desperately to break out of a destructive routine. Pakkasvirta uses caricature and dream sequences, but his stylisation works. There is, for instance, an extraordinary sequence in which the woman takes her children to a desolate open space and tells them a fairy story which becomes, unconsciously, progressively more violent and grotesque. Pakkasvirta's second feature, *Summer Rebellion* (1969), is even more ambitious, and in its attempt to confront the Finnish situation (the film is subtitled 'In pursuit of Finnish happiness') uses an even greater variety of methods, including fiction and documentary, parody, political texts and much else. Its analysis of consumer society is recognisably Godardian and sometimes confused; but it is, importantly, a brave film, a film which isn't afraid to take risks.

As co-scriptwriter of *Summer Rebellion* and Jarva's later films, the critic Peter von Bagh is very much part of the new cinema; but his own first feature, *The Count* (1971), takes a thoroughly individual approach to the problem of social analysis. The film, a true farce, proved highly controversial, attacked on the one hand for its vulgarity and on the other for not being socially critical. In his story of the amorous adventures of a real-life romantic and sexual con-man who claims to have been engaged seventy-six times, von Bagh pursues a number of objectives. He has a critical interest in the dialectical interplay of fiction and documentary which emerges from having the man play himself. Then, since the 'Count' is an entertainer and 'hero' of the scandal magazines (in a preface he is called 'the dream of every Finnish man'), he is treated as a symptomatically synthetic romantic product of the consciousness industry. The film's enormous shifts of mood, from farce to pathos and from vulgarity to lyricism, are designed both to explode bourgeois ideals and to emphasise the ambiguity of the Count's social role. *The Count* is uneven in achievement, but at the least it reveals in von Bagh an original talent.

Jarva's own subsequent films, *Time of Roses* (1969) and *Rally* (1970), are less successful than *A Worker's Diary* or Pakkasvirta's films. *Time of Roses* is a sort of social science fiction story set in a peaceful and prosperous 2012, but designed to expose subtle bourgeois and meritocratic distortion in its story of a 'conscientious' television producer's efforts to make a 'true programme about an ordinary girl who died in 1976.' *Rally*, which views automobile culture as an image of society as a whole, is a reminder that Jarva has also worked



Above: 'Rally'. Below: Liisamajja Laaksonen in 'Poor Marja!'



Below: Pertti Ylermi Lindgren, Elina Salo in 'The Count'



extensively in documentaries on social subjects. There is a certain academicism about his work, making his status as Professor of Arts seem rather appropriate at times. *Time of Roses* and *Rally* are sometimes a little laboured in exposition, and too lingering in their effects. But Jarva's new film, *When the Heavens Fall . . .* (1972), is a return to form. As usual the film begins from a contemporary problem—the rise and effect of the

scandal press—and fuses personal and social dramas, but the style is much less cool and detached than previously. The approach here is more oblique, with the social point being made through the obsessive love story of a magazine editor and one of his victims.

Not all the films of this new cinema have been commercial successes and most have been controversial, partly because of their social content and partly because of their stylistic innovations. But they did find audiences and they did make an impact. This is partly explained by the political situation in which the film-makers have been working, in particular the existence of a divided but large and genuinely popular Left with strong traditions. Just as Antti Peippo's short film *Viapori—Castle of Finland* (1972) reinterprets along socialist lines the 'official' history of one of Helsinki's biggest tourist attractions, so the youthful KOM-Teatteri produces musical plays which interpret moments in Finnish history from the Communist point of view. This group can find authentic popular audiences with the kind of productions which in Britain would be the preserve of the middle class. The obvious comparison is with the Berliner Ensemble; and indeed the influence of Brecht is very noticeable not just in theatre and in forceful political songs, but in the way parody and factual data as well as song are used extensively in film—for instance, in Jarva's *Rally*.

When Kaj Chydenius (the Nordic Brecht-Weill) was asked about his songs being translated, he replied that he would not mind, but that as a Marxist he could write about and work only for the situation in his own country. It is no paradox that it is this attitude among Finnish Left artists which makes their work of international interest at the same time that it has direct relevance to their national situation. There is little spurious 'internationalism' about this new cinema. As Peter von Bagh has said, 'In order to become truly international, a film must be profoundly national.'

Jörn Donner has said that he finds it more interesting to deal with moral problems 'than even to try to touch on direct social problems that call for a solution'—in contrast to Jarva, who stresses that 'consciousness of social responsibility . . . is a first requirement' for his film-making. Nevertheless, Donner, who made his initial reputation in Sweden, has been an important force in the new Finnish cinema. It was his company, for example, which produced *Under Your Skin*, and most recently *Poor Marja!* (1972) by the radical woman director Eija-Elina Bergholm, whose earlier credits include co-scripting Donner's own *Anna*. *Poor Marja!* examines a woman's struggle to find her place in bourgeois society, and is based on research into the lives of women in three generations (we also see Marja's widowed mother and her grandmother, forced to leave her country house for an old people's home). The film is not quite naturalistic, and its ending is in a sense imposed—a leap of faith.

After destructive affairs with men and uneasy manoeuvrings in office politics, Marja moves away to her provincial home and later to the countryside with her grandmother. This retreat is followed by

self-withdrawal; and by the end, alienated and unconscious of her actions, Marja simply runs away into the night. She is found next morning by a worker outside his hut. He gently takes care of her, asking nothing of her. No more words are spoken, but a song about Marja is sung over the final images of her visit to a workers' café, a montage sequence of very direct, simple images of men, women and children at ease with themselves and others; here is that sense of identity which until now Marja has lacked. As if to emphasise the political divisions in Finland, one critic took the ending to mean that Marja had resorted to prostitution.

Although Donner's latest Finnish film, *Tenderness* (1972), shows him still working in the slightly thin vein of low-key sexual comedy, he has also recently made films with more direct social concern, in particular the team-made documentary *Fuck off! Images from Finland* (1971). 'We wanted to show people, human beings in close-up, and we gradually enlarged the scope of the questioning, from wages and security to politics and power and the isolation in remote villages.' The result is an engaging, often biting reportage on the state of Finland, and it defines Donner's other work to the extent that it is a strange sight indeed to see Donner interviewing Karelian labourers about their struggle to survive.

If the most important characteristic of this new cinema is the way it manages to combine, and make inseparable, the personal and social levels and the attempt to come to terms with the Finnish situation, then Mikko Niskanen's *Eight Deadly Shots* (1972) is one of its finest achievements. Like the other films, it stands in direct relation to Finnish tradition, offering a really 'alternative' vision. The rural film has a long tradition, but rural life is in transition and Niskanen's film offers an acute analysis of this situation; the fine opening, for instance, counterpoints images of decaying rural life with a traditional song about the glories of the Finnish countryside. Originally made for television in a five-hour version, and an almost wholly personal achievement (Niskanen wrote the screenplay and also plays the main part), *Eight Deadly Shots* is a painstaking reconstruction of the events leading up to a famous crime of a few years ago in which a poor tenant farmer shot and killed four policemen, apparently without motivation.



'A Worker's Diary'

Niskanen takes the crime as symptomatic of the enormous social and economic problems of rural life, but manages to create vividly, by superb observation of family and work life, the sense of one man's experience. The preparations for a family outing to a local wedding, for example, are observed with gently amusing detail; then at the wedding Pasi, the farmer, and his wife dance, Pasi slips out, talks with other men, and the subject of drinking comes up. The mood changes from lightness to anger and finally violence. Niskanen does not hurry such sequences, giving them the time they need to build up; in this way simple events become telling moments in the general drama. Carting logs in a snowbound forest, Pasi's old horse gets stuck, and there follows a touching scene in which the horse strains to respond to Pasi's tender coaxing, finally pulling itself free; later, the police come to remove the horse in lieu of Pasi's unpaid taxes (naturally, without the horse Pasi is unable to work), but they get stuck and have to come back and ask his help, which is given with a wry smile. It is from the accumulation of such unstressed moments that the film derives its force. It

has been said that the short version (two and a half hours) makes the film more a portrait of an alcoholic—moonshining is seen as a desperate rebellion against the authorities—than a broad picture of a section of society; but even so it is one of the very few films in which one experiences directly the rhythms of nature and of work. In its realistic detail and slow, even oppressive style, the film has been compared to Zola, but it has moments of tenderness and gentle humour which make its final effect much more than simply bleak.

Finnish cinema has its problems, and not only economic ones. There are many filmmakers who think that overtly political cinema is ruining the industry by alienating audiences. Against this, one must put the commercial success of at least some of the films, and the conviction of those filmmakers who believe that their cinema can and must speak of and to the society in which it is produced, can and must take part in shaping that society. A small industry which can produce films of the stature and social relevance of *A Worker's Diary* and *Eight Deadly Shots* is one of which we shall hear more.

Japanese Notebook

from page 30

in *Tobacco Road*, and ethnographical descriptions. Not surprisingly, it lacks real coherence, with legend, ritual and contemporary allusions uneasily jumbled together. Its almost hypnotic spell is a reflection of Imamura's skill in bringing to life the island and its people, as one startling or eccentric image follows another. (The son who spends twenty years digging a pool in order to undermine a huge rock; the gathering together of the villagers on the sea shore for an act of fish worship.) The real *coup de théâtre* comes in a magnificently shot sequence showing a pair of illicit lovers being pursued across the ocean and murdered

by the outraged peasants, culminating in a glimpse of a shark waiting fathoms below in a steel blue sea.

Kobayashi's most recent production, *Inn of Evil*, returns to his favourite theme of the lone figure transfixed by a crisis of conscience which finally destroys him. In this case, it is difficult fully to believe in the sentimental change of heart experienced by a wicked smuggler (Tatsuya Nakadai in his most pop-eyed mood) and his gang, who try to help a young man rescue his girl from a geisha house. Yet, atmospherically, the film carries many of Kobayashi's characteristic fingerprints, notably in the splendid use of a mist-shrouded riverside inn where the smugglers congregate, with its profusion of wooden walls and use of three clearly

defined levels of action. As in *Rebellion*, Kobayashi reserves his main action until the end: a fantastic ballet of black and white shapes as dozens of policemen carrying lanterns converge on the inn, chase the inmates across dark, menacing swamps, and finally trap them in nets and long, wispy ropes. If only European directors could shoot like this. . .

An Ozu tailpiece. While in London, Mr. Yamada recalled a meeting with Ozu when the latter came back during the war from Singapore, where he had seen many American films. Moodily shaking his head, Ozu muttered, 'After seeing *The Grapes of Wrath*, I knew Japan couldn't win the war.'

Stanley Kubrick's films seem to provoke the kind of mindless praise and attack that is called 'controversy' these days. In the case of *A Clockwork Orange*, the responses have ranged from 'brilliant' to 'boring', with special attention to the film's depictions of violence. If the viewer responds to nothing else, he is sure to notice the sensational subject matter. Of course, violence is a difficult subject for visual treatment. The question must be, does the work provide a context that can safely hold such distracting materials? Kubrick has been careful to offer such a container. But if the viewer refuses it, he is left holding the inevitables—violence, sex, death—at least as far as chatter and film criticism are concerned.

A Clockwork Orange has a number of things to say about violence. It shows the victim's pain. Only the naturalistic details of suffering in *Bonnie and Clyde* are comparable in this respect to Kubrick's work, and Kubrick's is the more daring stylistically. The film also shows the joy of the attack, especially in the balletic gang-fight. But the parody there of bar-room brawls alerts us to the very special point of view even as we enjoy the feral grace. The beating of the tramp is nastiness seen darkly, peripherally. We all know it happens, but what to do? The attack on the HOME is the scene everyone will remember. Like *Bonnie and Clyde*'s set-pieces of extempore chaos, part of the power of the scene is the anything-can-happen surprise of the visit. But Kubrick combines the gang's brutal improvisations with Alex's calculated song and dance: realistic detail and stylised action that reinforce one another and indicate the state of

mind that is the subject of the film. Some have found only a technique of estrangement in the stylised violence. I find myself distanced and touched. Somehow the artificiality makes the violence more painful, Alex's coolly committed acts more evil.

Then there are those reviewers who have found Alex the only 'attractive' figure in the film. But surely evil is alluring; and ungenerous, too—an important point when the immediate vision we get is Alex's. Would the death of the rather attractively tart Catlady be the more appalling if it were not the obscene obliteration from Alex's ecstatic consciousness that the film records? Alexander De Large must not only conquer his world. He must unify it, no matter how distorted the final vision. His habit coincides with Kubrick's attempts to give a motion picture a complexity of visual coherence, to create a system of visual correspondences that will illuminate its theme. To complain

of Alex's singular attractiveness is to indicate a naïveté about the role and to compliment Malcolm McDowell's rendering of evil's various charms. Kubrick's future society is 'Alexed' into a child's refuse-strewn playground.

The child keeps meeting fragments of himself in his career of crime; even his costume—white overalls, boots, bowler hat—looks borrowed from the technicians, guards and politicians he encounters. Alex is characterised not only by his actions against society, but in the actions of the State against Alex. The two are equated in the film, his charm reproduced in its durance, the principal difference—a perhaps considerable one—in the State's coarsely institutional and indiscriminately committed immoralities that Alex can only practise on a restricted scale. Those critics who find special pleading for Alex in the State's depredations against him ignore the equation, a real accomplishment in so carefully structured a work. Not only do each of the initial scenes of gang violence return in the retribution sequences at the end; they also set up the chief spheres of conflict throughout. The tramp is Alex's representative of an indifferent society; Billyboy's rival gang a prefiguration of Alex's murderous droogs; and Mr. Alexander, in his very name, an indication of Alex's self-directed destructiveness. Just as Alex forces Mr. Alexander to watch the unspeakable, so Alex will be forced by the State. Both Alexanders are enemies of the State and share a name that means 'defender of men'. When Alex is interrogated by the quartet at the police station, he ironically invokes the law, just like the tramp at the mercy of his four tormentors. The martinet Chief Guard at the prison is Alex the gang-leader, and he inflicts inhumanities on Alex as Alex does on his victims. When Alex comically mimics him at the Medical Institute reception centre, he only punctuates the careful parallels of individual and State which we have seen all along.

The psychological mechanism behind Alex's unifying vision is that of 'projection'. All Alex's victims are outside society—the tramp, the gang, the radical—and when he punishes them, he unknowingly punishes himself. The 'mirror defence' of projection works to throw outward, to spit out, the consciously disowned aspects of the personality by ascribing them to others. The mechanism is itself unconscious. When Alex commits evil, he enjoys the pleasure of the act itself, the knowledge that it is considered wrong by society, and the unconscious justification of the act through projection. Thus, Alex rapes, ensures there is a witness to the rape, and punishes the 'complacency' of the victim. Evil is honoured, sharpened and justified. Alex levels the social ranks of his victims. A ballet of hoods implies a foregone conclusion: masculine power is questioned only to be affirmed. The drunk's rhetorical complaints are Alex's own: he hears just what he wants to hear. Throughout the film, figures of authority (Deltoid, the police, the Chief Guard, the doctors and the Minister of the Interior) are all versions of the gang leader.

As the equation is perfect but in one respect, Alex is conscious of his evil—horribly so—except in his need for self-justification. How reviewers could have

Don Daniels

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

Alex as victim: the attack by the river



missed the comedy of childish egotism is a kind of perfection in itself. The infantile fantasies show Alex's blindness to his own psychology through a masochistic dream in which he always triumphs despite indignity, torture and 'suicide'. Men court him, newspapers celebrate him, Hitler apes him. The lovely bird motif throughout the film—the Beethoven *frissons* in Bar and lair; the malchick screams at the Medical Institute's sinny; the gull over the Thames; and the growing boy eating from the Minister's hands—not only indicates the variety and integration Kubrick achieves through motivic relationships, but Alex's pathetic desire for freedom in the midst of blind dependence. Just an ordinary boy, with a stash, a pet and a love of Beethoven.

Kubrick has appropriated theme, character, narrative and dialogue from Anthony Burgess' novel, but the film is more than a literal translation of a construct of language into dramatic-visual form. Kubrick's film refashions the materials of the novel, and the rigour of the reworking gives the film a poetic compression and resonance that the novel lacks, despite its disturbing narrator, intricate structure and brilliant language. 'Nadsat' figures primarily in only the first third of the movie, but Kubrick has included much of Burgess' narrative invention, and as a result the Alexanders of film and novel conquer similar empires. The unifying parallels between citizen and State and the mechanism of projection are taken from the novel, although Kubrick finds new ways of communicating them visually.

There is a psychological name for the kind of ferocious insanity directed at the fabric of society that Burgess and Kubrick portray. It is 'Alexanderism', *agriothymia ambitiosa*, and it designates the desire to destroy nations. Alex is murderer, rapist, thief, hood—a Bad Bad boy. The film assumes the evil of his acts to be evident. What is condemned specifically is not the act but the mental dynamics that led to it. The shouts of the gang in their frolickings are mechanical, self-advertising, a bit joyless; obviously another kind of pleasure is being had in addition to simple sadism. When Alex moves to Rossini against the rival gang, or his own gang, or the Catlady, he mirrors his State's political conflicts. For the corrupt citizen and State, violent conflict is a necessary instrument of self-creation.

Burgess' novel is a fictional expression of this idea from the psychological writings of Franz Alexander, the neo-Freudian noted for his studies of psychosomatic diseases. Towards the end of his life, Alexander studied the use of motion pictures to create stress in victims of hyperthyroidism (*Psychosomatic Medicine*, XXIII, No. 2, 1961, 104–114). But the generative materials of the novel can be found in the psychologist's earlier work, *The Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality*. The orange is clockwork because of what Franz Alexander would term the 'mechanism of neurosis'. For him, social expressions of violence mirror the conflict within the individual of ego, id and super-ego.

In the healthy personality, the super-ego aids the economy of the psyche with automatic, unconscious repression of the instincts. But in the neurotic, the super-ego

is rigid and schematic in its automatic censorship, like an unbending totalitarian state. This unconscious part of the ego is formed by social laws and parental restraints. When the id threatens to invade the conscious mind with its anti-social desires, the super-ego represses without the ego's awareness of the repression. And in the neurotic, suffering becomes a method of obtaining instinctual release. The super-ego aids the id through over-severity. According to Alexander, 'Clinical experience taught me that the ego makes use of the satisfaction of the need for punishment in order to free itself from the super-ego and surrender itself to the repressed forces.' The corrupt State is 'a macrocosmic repetition of the ego-structure,' for as radical parties war for the sake of conflict, so do id and super-ego. Energy is expended internally rather than expressed. Violence becomes an end in itself. The neurotic drama of id, ego and super-ego is not just a metaphorical one for Alexander; he calls them 'part-personalities' and characterises the super-ego as a 'corrupt official', outwardly severe but privately bribeable. The super-ego conspires with the id and punishes the ego. The neurotic suffers in order to 'pay' for subsequent instinctual release. Punishment rids the ego of the prickings of conscience and adds zest to subsequent expression of instinctual desires.

In novel and film, Alex's career is an allegory of the disguise of instinctual impulse in neurotic symptom, of punishment endured to facilitate crime. By suffering, the ego absolves itself of sin and justifies its commission. Alex has learned the formula well that sees pain as part of pleasurable fulfilment; in fact, a licence to it. With Deltoid and the Minister the arrangement is as clear 'as an azure sky of deepest summer'. Each of Alex's triumphs is preceded or followed by defeat. The 'perfect evening' and the orgy must be paid for by Deltoid's visit and the mutiny of the gang in a series of pleasure-pain, manic-depressive rewards and punishments. Justice demands an eye for an eye. When Alex kills, he goes to prison. The Minister complains that the prisoners 'enjoy their so-called punishment' and counsels Alex on his way to the Medical Facility, 'Let's hope you make the most of it, my boy.'

The self-punishment is signalled in the film by the 'Adagio' from the *William Tell* 'Overture'. The home-coming scene is almost straight from the novel and beautifully played: Alex punishes himself, is punished by his parents (and Joe the Boarder, the Good Good Boy), and punishes Pee and Em in a family circle of guilt. Absolution comes in the near-drowning, nature's purifying rain, and Mr. Alexander's bath. When Alex's groans in the hospital are mixed with those of fornication, we hear Alex's pleasure-in-pain; the exorcism of restraint through punishment allows for masochistic delights as well.

Franz Alexander quotes Schiller's ballad 'The Ring of Polykrates': 'Therefore if thou desirest to ward off suffering, pray to the Invisible Powers that they add pain to happiness.' The universal sense of foreboding in the midst of joy is visualised in the film in the Last Supper that Kubrick has arranged for Alex—an ancient symbolic intimation of the pleasure-pain principle. Alex is the scapegoat (like the three con-

demned men in *Paths of Glory*), the sacrificial lamb, and his story is mythic—that of Osiris, Dionysus, and Christ. Death and suffering lead to absolution and resurrection. In the hospital, 'Eat me' on the fruit basket from Alex's parents is both obscene and sacramental. The film is Alex's masturbatory fantasy. When he listens to Beethoven, four suffering Christs dance. And he commits 'suicide' for his own ends. Alexander quotes Freud (*The Economic Problem in Masochism*): '... even self-destruction cannot take place without libidinal satisfaction.'

For Alexander, the Oedipus complex is 'the nuclear or root complex of all psychoneuroses.' The child must learn to sublimate the love and hate for his parents in tenderness, but there is always some destructive energy left over to be turned against society or against the self. The introversion of the death instinct Alexander sees as 'the primary process in the formation of the neurosis.' Alex provokes hatred in order to justify his anti-social acts and to punish himself. In the compulsion neurosis, Alexander suggests that the father is often identified with the strictness of the super-ego. Alex's parents have not only lost all authority; they have been raped and crippled at HOME. Alex commits symbolic incest (Kubrick carefully does not allow his crime to become matricide in the film) and, indirectly, patricide. With sets and lighting Kubrick has emphasised the rational realm of HOME. The conscious ego is unaware of the secret plans of the instincts. In fact, Kubrick allows Mr. Alexander to prompt his wife to let the forces in. When the 'father' is forced to watch the rape, it is the 'son's' revenge, the sinner watching his sin in all pride, and the id defining its power through the agency of the super-ego.

The Catlady is not so trusting. Her Health Farm is the very *locus* of the super-ego, all instincts honoured in domestication, like her cats and erotic art. Franz Alexander outlines the relationship of the super-ego with the id, both beyond the ken of the ego, but each aware of the other. The super-ego is not fooled by the disguises of desire. In the film, Kubrick has the Catlady call the police, unlike Mr. Alexander, thus allying her with the State and clarifying that the gang merely takes advantage of the call, having offered the attack on the Farm as a bribe to their tyrannical leader. Alex and the Catlady recognise each other immediately. Kubrick turns their fight into a dance in which the unconscious forces of the id (the phallus) battle the conscious personality (the bust of Beethoven). The bust is a symbol of instinct sublimated into the socially useful energy of artistic expression. When the Catlady strikes Alex, the ego is punished because of the id's threat of instinctual release. Having suffered, Alex can then overwhelm the personality and triumph.

Alex's roles are three. In attack he is the id's ever-renewing energies; in command he is the super-ego's ancient despotism; and in pain he is the neurotic ego. In the prison and final HOME sequences, Alex meets the leaders of the State's warring gangs—a new Mr. Alexander and Frederick, the Minister of the Inferior (his name, Kubrick's contribution, means 'peaceful ruler'). The ego is to the super-ego as a citizen of a totalitarian

state is to his government. He is unaware of the government's machinations. And the State is indifferent to him. When Alexander De Large meets Frederick De Large in the prison, still another version of the crime-punishment contract is signed, to be honoured in Alex's conditioning and final rehabilitation. The coda between them in the hospital is another of Kubrick's scenes of duplicity and degraded language. Speech becomes a conspiratorial purr, a litany to console and corrupt, like Dr. Branom's promise, between injections, 'By this time tomorrow, you'll be healthier still,' delivered with that obsessional faith it is Kubrick's gift to record exactly.

Alex and Mr. Alexander, two 'victims', return again at the end of the film. Kubrick has Alex cripple Mr. Alexander, who becomes an enemy of the State and the very personification of the uninhibited instincts. By removing information about Mr. Alexander before the attack, Kubrick makes his politics and his madness seem even more its result. Having suffered, he derives his radical opinions from personal impotence and a liberated desire for revenge. Thus, Mr. Alexander's insanity reveals the same dynamic that is at the root of Alex's hatred of the world and himself. As Franz Alexander suggests, the outwardly directed destructive energies of the unconscious, when turned upon the self, become the super-ego's sadism. Like General Mireau's retaliations for military defeat in *Paths of Glory*, Alex and Mr. Alexander revenge themselves on each other. Kubrick has combined in Mr. Alexander the various roles Alex alternates throughout the film. His Mr. Alexander is the crippled neurotic ego, the government of the super-ego, punishing Alex, and the power of the id, revolting against all order. Like Dr. Strangelove, he beautifully and boldly summarises the madness of the subject. I am thinking of his orgasm of pain and hatred upon recalling his cripple, and the final shot of him madly torturing with the 'Ninth' while surrounded by his co-conspirators.

Kubrick has compared Alex's craft and guile to that of Richard III. But the comparison cannot go very far, for Alex is unconscious of his clockwork. Free will necessitates self-knowledge. Alex is lost in the funhouse mirrors of the narcissist, in the doubles of his victims, in the mirrors of HOME, and in the water imagery throughout the film. There is that magnificent shot of Billyboy the pirate that leads to Alex's marine discipline of his droogs; and later the suicide thoughts by the Thames, the watery bit of corporal, the cleansing rain and bath. The socialist state is a little boy's playpen (Kubrick has made certain the prison doesn't look all *that* uncomfortable).

One of the director's crucial decisions was his very faithfulness to Burgess' narrative structure. The compression inevitably makes the psychological entrapment all the more obvious. In the novel the neurotic formula might possibly be overlooked. On screen, the hyperbolic structure undercuts and exposes the mechanism. The rhetoric is even more heightened than in the novel, but not coarsened. And Alex's litany, 'Clear as an azure sky', never seemed more desperate or ironic.

How ironic too that while Alex's masturbatory dreams are clips from Grade-B horrorshows, the Institute's sinnies look like parodies of 'realistic', Grade-A Hollywood (*Straw Dogs*, for example). While Alex comments on the realism of glorious Technicolor, Dr. Brodsky monitors the death of consciousness. When Walter Carlos' beautiful electronic transcription of the 'Joy' theme's 'Turkish' march variation that accompanies Alex through the Bootick re-enters beneath the 'unstaged' scenes of World War II devastation, the frame of the film widens startlingly. The mirror images multiply from the neurotic, to the gang, to the State, to the paths of glory. Consciousness and freedom lie in ruins.

Alex toasts us, fellow patrons of the Korova Milkbar, at the start of the film. The Vice needs his audience. Kubrick has visualised

the ego's self-dramatising habit with actor-audience scenes throughout. Billyboy's near-rape is enacted on-stage. Alex then arranges a rape for an audience and later becomes an audience for rape. The State dramatises Alex's redemption at the Passing-Out ceremony (the Min of the Int: 'At this stage we introduce the subject himself'). An Ascot audience applauds Alex's fantasy-rape at the end. And the film has as many eyes as 2001, from eyelashes to cuff-links, to Alex's surgically clamped gaze.

Alex is seen as blind to the interdependence of the individual and society. The imagery of theatre and vision reveals that Alex insists on breaking down that unity to step aside for the voyeur's sense of power. The State punishes him for this separation, initiates him, but—if his vision can be trusted—into a corrupt society. In its punishment of the neurotic personality, the super-ego disrupts the unity of the psyche but preserves the integrity of the suffering ego. 'The world is one, life is one,' muses Dr. Brodsky in the novel. In the film, the newspapers champion 'Alex Burgess'. The citizen of a British borough is his own enemy.

The comparison to Richard III may be another Kubrick red herring (although Alex is recognisable in Richard's 'Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass/That I may see my shadow as I pass'). The closer Shakespearian comparison that Burgess and Kubrick surely have in mind is Iago (the brainwashing technique is Ludovico's). Like Iago, Alex is guide, teacher, and 'playwright', even to conditioning. As in *Othello*, his chief victim goes mad for revenge. Alex acts out the violence of Iago's language. Both take pride in their evil. And the HOME rape may well be intended as a version of the Act IV, scene 1 playlet that Iago stages with Cassio and Bianca for a gullible Othello. Othello, after all, projects his fantasies on to Desdemona and luxuriates in self-torture. There is Stephen's description of the 'hornmad Iago' in *Ulysses*, 'ceaselessly willing that the moor in him shall suffer.' Both Alex and Iago are like Genet's Saints of Evil, creating self through crime—and utterly unpunishable. The Anti-Christ is vampire, lost in the bonds of theft.

The ending of novel and film leaves Alex free to choose new or old 'freedoms'. If we get a 'cleaner' Alex in the movie—no pedophilia, no 'matricide', no prison murder—it is because his first sin is against himself. The cause of much confusion among his critics has been Kubrick's ability to make us privy to Alex's vision, to show us its seductive beauty while carefully keeping all hands clean. More than a visual investiture of a novelist's or a psychologist's conceits, *A Clockwork Orange* is not a simple film. We watch with no little admiration as Alex demonstrates the coherence he can achieve with a hoodlum artist's exploitation of everything at hand to shape the self. We watch the Alexandrians attempt the formality of dance without ever truly achieving the Dionysian ecstasy that liberates, the 'fantasy' that frees. But the director—who has always been alive to the rhythms of structure—contrasts the locksteps of self-enslavement with the organic beauty of the movements of his film, to suggest something like true freedom from the very heart of fantasy and mechanism.

Alex as final victor: 'the growing boy eating from the Minister's hands'



Film REVIEWS

L'Amour, l'Après-Midi

Scott Fitzgerald once wrote that the test of a first-rate intelligence is 'the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.' Eric Rohmer, a first-rate intelligence if ever there was one, has compiled his moral tales as a dossier of sensibility struggling with the temptation to engage itself with two ideas (or ideals, or dreams, or attachments) at the same time. He always said that the sixth *conte moral* would be the last, and with *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* (the English title, *Love in the Afternoon*, seems an unnecessary lift from the old Hepburn-Wilder picture) we have reached the end. For the last time, in this context at least (Rohmer's next film is apparently likely to have a medieval theme), choice is confirmed by chance.

Just as Chabrol has said that in his films 'a Charles will never kill a Paul', so in Rohmer's universe one knows that the first commitment will always be the final one. His chaste and obstinate heroes (Frédéric here, Jean-Louis in *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*) will take circuitous routes, through their own smugness about themselves and their awareness of the world outside, back to their original attachments. Rohmer's is a cinema not of absolute moralities but of absolute commitments. And, as the *contes moraux* have progressed, so Rohmer has significantly advanced the stage at which the action begins. In *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*, Jean-Louis has merely made up his mind to marry the girl he sees across the aisle in church; in *Le Genou de Claire* Jérôme is engaged; in *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* (Gala) Frédéric is very happily married. The temptations and the forces of resistance shift their ground with the context in which they are encountered: this time, possibility confronts the married man's settled reality.

Frédéric (Bernard Verley) is a contented man. His partnership in a small business is flourishing; his wife Hélène (Françoise Verley) has kept on her teaching job, is working on a thesis, and retains a mental independence which satisfies both of them. They have one small child, are about to have another, and have drawn around themselves a neat circle of easy assurance. Frédéric even likes Paris, likes the drama of city crowds, finds only depression in the unfocused and shapeless countryside. He lives among the clear colours of a clear world (Rohmer's décors and Nestor Almendros' camerawork are, as usual, immaculate), at ease with all the city sounds whose buzz and mumble colour the film's soundtrack. His pastime, in the late lunch-hour he likes to take, is window-shopping for clothes and for girls. Since his marriage, Frédéric 'finds all women beautiful'; from the centre of his security, he can explore his defences by looking out at a city of girls—alluring, intriguing, mysterious and, ultimately, unwanted. He day-dreams of 'first loves and lasting loves'. In a parade of afternoon dreams, the heroines of previous moral tales advance towards him across the Paris pavements, conquests for the mind.

An interruption arrives in the form of Chloe (Zouzou), a chance visitor from a past perhaps slightly less seemly than Frédéric's well-ordered

present. She is a drifting, insecure stranger, who once apparently drove a friend of Frédéric's to the edge of suicide, has been abroad for several years, and now turns up in his office, looking vaguely for a job—or perhaps in a more real sense for a contact. Chloe is demanding and difficult: she drags him out of the office, flutters the secretaries, makes appointments and fails to keep them. She tantalises the dreamer in Frédéric with her availability and her sudden disappearances (Rohmer is well aware of the Proustian attraction of the lady who vanishes), at the same time that she irritates the businessman. Her job as a waitress keeps her busy when he is free; part of the charm of the precarious relationship is the problem of finding time. They meet in the afternoons—to talk.

The situation only fails to be commonplace—which means that it is never commonplace—because of the finesse of the characterisation, the details of discovery, and the authority of Rohmer's moral barricades. Truffaut, in *Domicile Conjugal*, took the identical situation of a loving young husband, drawn outside his prison of satisfaction by the lure of the slightly dangerous. But Antoine Doinel, the eternal child, was attracted to his Japanese girl by her exoticism, and the relationship foundered when he realised that he had to telephone his wife to find someone to talk to. Rohmer's adults find counter-attractions: it is to Chloe that Frédéric talks, and with his wife that he spends his evenings quietly reading. The untested dream of 'first loves and lasting loves' melts before the cantankerous, difficult, changeable reality of Chloe. His attraction for her lies in his apparent solidity; hers for him in her instability. Both are playing roles—and hesitating over those roles'

'L'Amour, l'Après-Midi': Bernard Verley



implications. Rohmer charts what Frédéric calls their 'faltering friendship' in a fine shading of intricate contour lines.

As in all Rohmer's films, there's a steady connection between a time of day, a place and a state of mind. Apart from his episode in *Paris Vu par...*, the only previous Rohmer feature set in Paris was *Le Signe du Lion*—and that was the Paris of the dog days, summer by the Seine with only the tramps and the tourists left in town. *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* is pitched, from the opening sequence of Frédéric's strap-hanging ride to work, in the setting of offices, office conversations, snatched lunches. Prosaically, the office calendar lets us know how time is progressing—a fortnight or a month during which Chloe has been away, or Hélène has brought the baby home from hospital—while the office remains the place where time changelessly passes. Frédéric's time-table contains an afternoon space into which Chloe can be slipped: it is circumstance as much as character which determines where and how and why they meet. And, typically, it is a chatting, unregarded woman overheard in a restaurant who makes Rohmer's point that it is the setting which counts. For previous Rohmer heroines, the Riviera, Clermont-Ferrand, Annecy; for Chloe, Paris.

In a crowded restaurant, Chloe talks about suicide. Her early nervous swagger conceals vulnerability; but vulnerability is perhaps another layer, disguising a relentless determination to find her own centre. She wants Frédéric first for reassurance, and then (as Isadora Duncan wanted Shaw) as father for a child. Frédéric's retreats from seduction reveal him as another of those Rohmer characters who teeter on the edge of precipices from which they never really intend to jump. Half in and half out of his sweater (throughout the film, sweaters, including the one Chloe buys as a present for the new baby, play a highly significant role), he finally bolts from the ultimate hazard of a naked Chloe. His precipitate flight shows him as at once comical coward and man of principle: the coward runs, and the man of principle runs back, with new illuminations, to his wife and his timeless private life. 'I don't like afternoons,' he says, almost fretfully; Hélène doesn't like them either. The pattern is complete; the illusions of choice and free will once more worked out to a conclusion, in which absolute commitments triumph absolutely.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean

Judge Roy Bean was a 'character', a colourful figure of a kind spawned all over the West in the late nineteenth century. Born in Kentucky sometime in the mid-1820s, he drifted around California and Mexico and served opportunistically with a dubious Confederate guerrilla band in the Civil War, before emerging into verifiable history in the early 1880s as a self-appointed justice of the peace, 'the Law West of the Pecos', in the remote West Texas hamlet of Langtry, where he continued to dispense justice, liquor and sex—most of it pretty rough—until his death in 1902.

He was by all accounts a fairly repulsive character: smelly, ugly, drunken, racist, dishonest, yet charming, eloquent and comic in an expansive frontier fashion. The great passion of his life was the British actress Lily Langtry, the 'Jersey Lily' after whom he named his bar-cum-courthouse, though not—as he claimed—the town in which it was situated. Among other eccentricities he kept a pet bear, which was presented to Miss Langtry when she visited the community in 1903, shortly after Bean's death. The animal bolted and the citizens gave her the judge's revolver as a memento instead. There is little evidence to show that Bean did much actual harm (or much good either)—unlike, say, the psychotic Judge Parker of Arkansas, whose well deserved soubriquet 'The Hanging Judge' has been attached to Bean by the producers of *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* (Cinerama).

Bean himself nearly became a movie hero in his own right when in 1896 a prize-fight between Bob Fitzsimmons and Peter Maher was staged at Langtry. The octogenarian Bean was offered

a future in movies to secure his collaboration in filming it, but unfortunately the primitive equipment recording the fight went wrong, Bean retreated into an alcoholic stupor and a new venue was sought. But Hollywood hasn't done badly by him—there has been a television series based on his life, he's figured in numerous movies, and taken a place near centre stage in William Wyler's *The Westerner* in 1939 (where Walter Brennan's impersonation won an Academy Award) and Budd Boetticher's *A Time for Dying* (1969), when he was played by Victor Jory.

The combination of outrageous cynicism and rampant romanticism in Bean's career has a dual attraction for the film-maker, the draw of myth-making and demythologisation residing in a single self-destructive character. And it's easier to identify what appealed to director John Huston, co-producer and star Paul Newman, and neophyte screenwriter John Milius about this subject, than to explain why the result of their collaboration should turn out to be such a disappointment.

Milius, who wrote *Evel Knievel* and is about to direct his own biography of Dillinger, is clearly enamoured of bizarre Americana for its own sake. John Huston has always been attracted by colourful outsiders, laughing opponents of the system, and has become increasingly disenchanted with the American scene. *The Misfits* and, mostly recently, his astonishing return to early form, *Fat City*, are devastating realisations of his vision of present-day America's spiritual emptiness, false hopes and illusive promises. Apart from making an aggressive statement about modern American life, Newman, one assumes, saw in the role of Bean another version of that sad, innocent, simple-minded, honest loser on whom he has been ringing decreasingly rewarding variations

from *The Left-Handed Gun* through *Butch Cassidy* to the unspeakable *Pocket Money*.

An early title informs us that 'Maybe this isn't the way it was—but it's the way it should have been.' This disarmingly folksy statement prepares us for the way in which the events of Bean's life are reorganised, rather than radically changed, to forge an allegory about the corruption of American life by capitalism and gentility. Bean stands for the rough virtues of the frontier—a boozy, free-wheeling, poker-playing world of personal justice, male supremacy, community spirit, romantic dreaming. His opponent, and inexorable conqueror, is entrepreneur Frank Gass (Roddy McDowall), a prissy lawyer who organises the married women (all inevitably ex-whores) as a purity league and takes over first the local government and later, with the coming of an oil-boom, a burgeoning Twentieth Century City. Bean departs from the town around 1900 and comes back as a sprightly nonagenarian in 1920 to lead his former deputies and his daughter (now running the old saloon) in an orgy of destruction that returns this fascist, corporate Gomorrah to the dust from which it came.

The resemblance to the Brecht-Weill opera *Rise and Fall of the Town of Mahagonny* is striking—in outlook and outline that is, rather than in tone and treatment. And one recalls Brecht's description of that work: 'An attempt at an Epic Opera: an account of mores.' *Roy Bean* is clearly an attempt at an Epic Western and an account of American mores. It even uses some watered-down Brechtian effects, such as characters addressing themselves directly to the audience, short, sharp, exemplary scenes that make a single point, larger-than-life epic figures who represent social forces and attitudes. One could easily envisage it working on the stage as a sort of folk opera or as a play like that most Brechtian of American treatments of the West, Arthur Kopits' *Indians* (the Broadway production of which featured Stacy Keach, who briefly appears here along with numerous other 'guest stars').

John Huston has described *Roy Bean* as 'a romp—a lark'—though presumably a rather expensive one in which he intended to beat the devil out of Nixon's America. Regrettably it falls between two stools, failing on the one hand to be a taut, tight, serious fable, and lacking, on the other, a lightness, a gracefulness of touch that might have matched the better sequences of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. *Butch Cassidy* began with the title 'Most of what follows is true' and proceeded to exploit, or place itself at the mercy of, that truth. The more ambitious *Roy Bean* wallows in mixed intentions and is at its worst when most openly aping *Cassidy*. There are, for example, numerous montage sequences of sepia-tone stills and, most distressingly, a lyrical sequence in which Paul Newman's self-consciously ingratiating Bean, his simple Mexican mistress and a lovable bear romp around in the woods to Andy Williams singing a sickly number only too appropriately called 'Marmalade, Molasses and Honey', which is virtually a reprise of *Butch Cassidy's* equally contrived and anachronistic 'Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head'.

Sentimentality is piled on sententiousness, unfeeling cruelty on smug self-righteousness, until the jerry-built mythical edifice collapses like a miscalculated soufflé. The film eventually becomes a victim of both its internal contradictions and its external targets. More than anything else *Roy Bean* suggests a co-production of Walt Disney Studios and Hugh Hefner. And one recalls Peter Schrag's comment in his perceptive, if muddled, book *The Decline of the WASP*:

'Plastic holds much of Middle America together; old WASP virtues are replaced by synthetics, and the plastic WASP replaces the square.'

'The two great puritan entrepreneurs of

Paul Newman as Judge Roy Bean



culture in the twentieth century, Walt Disney of Disneyland and Hugh H. Hefner of *Playboy*, illustrate the transformation . . .

If Disney's attempts to employ technology to create a Middle American utopia resulted in a plastic universe of dancing dolls, animated mermaids, shrivelled heroes and, finally, an enervated and dehumanised world where technology was the only god, Hefner's parallel efforts to produce an anti-puritanical freedom spewed forth a cornucopia of kitsch which was considerably less horrible only because it so often parodied itself. If you pass through the secret door in Disneyland you will in short order be among the Playboy bunnies. . . . What Disney did with sentimentality Hefner accomplished by inversion.'

In this light, *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* is not just a sad waste of talent but an instructive exercise.

PHILIP FRENCH

The Candidate

One of the more irresistible remarks in *Millhouse* was Mr. Nixon's quoted comment (from the 1968 campaign) that if duty didn't call he'd really rather be somewhere like Oxford, writing 'two or three books a year'. Only the unconquerably naive would believe that Nixon's heart is in the Woodstock Road rather than the White House. But it was a somewhat over-enthusiastic effort by the arch-professional ('two or three books . . .') at recognising the present atmosphere of almost total mistrust for the political machine, and the preference for the politician who affects to be only partly absorbed in the business that wholly engages him. *The Candidate* (Columbia-Warner), Michael Ritchie's adroit piece of campaign journalism for 1972, springs from this climate. It's about the manufacture of a politician, a process seen as somewhat analogous to the conversion of curds and whey into processed cheese; and it assumes that the moviegoing electorate will take the corrupting and deadening weight of the political machine as a fact of life, so that the film can dodge the morality of the debate and more cynically annotate the detail.

The film's protagonist, Bill McKay, is plucked from his obscure, idealistic law practice and persuaded to stand as Democratic candidate for the Senate. His campaign manager, Marvin Lucas (Peter Boyle), baits the hook shrewdly: McKay can't possibly win, but he will have a year to say exactly what he pleases to the Californian voters, thereby ensuring publicity for his chosen causes. From there, the manufacturing processes close in: the tailoring and muffling of speeches, the packaging of the candidate for the media, the unsought alliances and the pulling of punches. McKay's father (Melvyn Douglas), a one-time State Governor and a shameless old warhorse of a machine politician, is wheeled out to endorse the campaign—and joins in with alacrity when he realises that his son is learning the politician's dissembling art. A bemused McKay is steered towards a possibility of victory; does indeed win the election; and is finally seen, a lost leader, asking his campaign manager, 'What do we do now?'

In Wilsonian style, *The Candidate* leaves most of its options open. McKay can be seen (too simply, perhaps) as the basically good guy who sells out; or as the not quite so good guy who learns the score and manages to retain some core of essential independence. His speeches may have become a meaningless jabber of edited phrases, but perhaps he still knows what he really wanted to say. Or does he? Perhaps he is a malleable tool because there isn't much sharp edge there to be blunted—only a vague radical goodwill, and some concern about safely fashionable areas like pollution. Even at the end one can take one's choice about why the film breaks with the American tradition of good



'The Candidate': Melvyn Douglas, Robert Redford

liberal losers (Stevenson, McCarthy) and allows him to win. Is it merely for the sake of that cynical last glance? Or because the film-makers believe that a McKay-style campaign, all soft edges and radical chic, would swing the vote against a seasoned, hard-line Republican opponent? The evidence would seem to suggest otherwise.

Michael Ritchie has been involved in campaign filming; Jeremy Lerner, the scriptwriter, was a speech-writer for Eugene McCarthy. As they pursue their own screen candidate around, you sense a pleasurable satisfaction in uncovering a little of how it's done—liberal guilts about the humbug of the sales technique mixed with convinced professionalism about the results. The television commercials for McKay are not satire: they don't need to be, and Allen Garfield's performance as the campaign's media man looks to be well studied from one or more living models. At the start of his campaign, McKay is an innocent amateur, bumbling about the streets trying to shake hands with strangers and making dull speeches to empty halls. Television creates the image of the bland, concerned young candidate; and although in a general sense the film may find this deplorable, in a more specific way it is happy to watch the mechanism at work.

There's a beautiful scene in which McKay is hauled out to the scene of a big fire, to be gauchely and ineffectually on the spot for the cameras; and is upstaged by his Republican opponent, who drops in by helicopter to announce that something may actually be done about the fires. Both men are playing for the cameras, but the sitting Senator has the authoritative lines. Ritchie and Lerner's film doesn't entirely shirk the futility of mere good intentions without a practical power basis; though as on other points, *The Candidate* plays these cards very close to its chest.

This begins to look like a Ritchie method. As in *Downhill Racer*, his new film prefers its drama to be read between the lines, through allusion and inference (the sidelong reference, for instance, to the girl whom the corruptible McKay has found to relax with on the campaign trail) rather than direct confrontation. Much of the film's attention goes into building atmospheric pressures: the constant accessibility of the candidate, the fatigue blurring the public face, the absurd snatched seconds for

private conversation in washrooms and hotel lifts, the forced surrender to adulators and cranks and the merely resentful man in the street. The political battle is fought not in the traditional smoke-filled rooms but under the TV lights. And Ritchie reconstructs the off-centre, hard-pressed style of journalistic filming, so that there is no visible jar when the real Senator McGovern or Hubert Humphrey passes in front of the camera.

In all this, *The Candidate* is styled to give the feeling of an inside job—sophisticated about politics as it is about movies, allowing the audience to glance at the machinery without really letting them near the engine-room. Robert Redford's performance is Kennedy-styled without being sycophantic or imitative: the actor suggests a hard, stubborn centre of resilience, giving the part a positive impetus which isn't always covered by the script. And in the long run, the film, after the manner of its own campaign commercials, backs away behind the performance, allowing charisma to substitute for lucid analysis. For *The Candidate*, too, is caught up in the media game; and content to play it coolly and rather lazily from its own safe seat on the fence.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Even Dwarfs Started Small

Jean Cocteau said often that he valued highest those films that were documentaries of unreal events; Werner Herzog's second feature *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (The Other Cinema) extends the principle to its logical conclusion by presenting itself from the start as a case history. Lights come up on prisoner No. 1300761 perched on a stool, awaiting interrogation. The credits are printed over slow pans across a flat, desolate landscape, establishing the locale for the action. A hen is glimpsed scratching and pecking at another's corpse. We are shown a still photograph of an unimposing cluster of buildings, each helpfully identified by a caption. Then back to 1300761, a male named Hombre who has at last managed to get the card bearing his number the right way up, now posing for photos for the files.

The interrogation begins, and Herzog moves into the flashback that occupies the remainder

of the film—a meticulous stage by stage analysis of a tiny revolution, when the inmates of a remote institution break free during the director's absence. The deputy director barricades himself in the office with Pepe, the ringleader, as hostage; meanwhile the inmates' aimlessly destructive violence gradually escalates, fatally dissipating their energies in malicious games rather than concerted action. Their behaviour nonetheless drives the deputy to insanity. As the others scatter, Hombre is left roaring with laughter till he chokes, watching a camel that apparently cannot get up off its knees.

In that they at least do something, Herzog's feeble revolutionaries are perhaps one rung up from the lethargic cripples of *L'Age d'Or*, who could barely stir from the filth they squatted in, let alone fight a cause. But their action is limited to rudimentary reprisals (destruction of the director's favourite palm tree, wrecking the institution van), and Herzog carefully emphasises that their awareness of their grievances is as numb-skulled as their retaliatory tactics (they complain of getting powdered milk, of being given gardening as work). This bunch are low on redeeming social merit. They are mean, petty, vulgar, selfish and destructive, just like Buñuel's recurrent beggars; men and women as confused and undirected as most of the world, trapped in the thought if not the manners of the society that has rejected them as criminals and deviants.

These inmates get as far as impeccably laying a table for dinner before realising that this is yet another social ritual they don't need to act out, and they don't think twice about giving directions to a *haute bourgeoisie* in her limousine on a nearby road. But Herzog isn't interested in passing moral judgments on them, any more than he's interested in making patronising 'statements' on man's capacity for inhumanity (in the manner of, say, *Lord of the Flies*, to which the film has shamefully been compared). Rather, to emphasise the sheer pettiness of these prisoners and their revolt, he has hit on the shatteringly direct notion of casting all the roles as dwarfs.

Now, clearly Herzog is no reactionary, and neither does he expect his audience to spend ninety-odd frustrating minutes contemplating how small man can be when the time and circumstances are right for so much more. *Even Dwarfs Started Small* has several positive functions. First, exorcism. Herzog himself speaks of the film as the realisation of a dream, and its prime impact is certainly as an expressionist vision of a *ne plus ultra* of internecine squabbling within the left. Second, strategy. Herzog uses the 'case history' format in order to document as accurately as possible just how and why this attempt at revolution is crippled from within; the film is a catalogue of potential threats to successful revolution. Third, humour. Much of the film is grotesquely funny, whether it's the deputy director pleading liberal motives in an effort to justify himself, or Hombre wilfully failing to climb on to a large bed to avoid having to perform coitus for the entertainment of the others. Herzog recognises that laughter is the only sane response in the face of such incompetence on both sides. Fourth, revolutionary potential. There are lots of throw-away suggestions that the dwarfs are especially favourably placed for real revolution; like Tod Browning's *Freaks*, they have a quasi-mystical communion with each other which implies that, given thought and direction, they could operate as a great team.

For a man with a keen eye for paradise (as his subsequent *Fata Morgana* makes plain), Herzog is prepared to expend a good deal of energy on sorting out man's present ills. *Dwarfs* is staged and shot with diagrammatic clarity, and if his flow of images doesn't quite coalesce into a visual syntax, then at least he has arrived at an admirable balance of content, form and implication in individual shots. He confines his music

track to two pieces, one a raucous gypsy-style song which seems to express the dwarfs' anarchic drive, and the other a chorale (it sounds like a primitive mass) that equally relates to the moments when the dwarfs do unite and play together. But for all the inner coherence of his film, Herzog's strength is his avoidance of dogma, prejudice and all the spurious liberal qualities like compassion. Like Buñuel alone, he is prepared to see man as man, however small.

TONY RAYNS

Duel

With almost insolent ease, *Duel* (Paramount) displays the philosopher's stone which the Existentialists sought so persistently and often so portentously: the perfect *acte gratuit*, complete, unaccountable and self-sufficient. Steven Spielberg, a television director making his first feature, sets the scene brilliantly from the outset with a subjective sequence showing a dark, constricting garage receding into the background as a commercial traveller (Dennis Weaver) starts out on his day's work, nosing slowly through busy city streets until he at last reaches the open highway.

The sense of liberation is precise, and the frustration almost tangible when the way ahead is suddenly blocked by a huge petrol lorry belching clouds of smoke and fumes. Muttering mild imprecations about pollution, the salesman airily overtakes and sits back to relax, only to find the lorry roaring ahead again. The manoeuvre is repeated, and this time he understands that the gauntlet is down. What he does not realise, as he cheerfully accepts the gage, is that the challenger means this to be a duel to the death.

The glory of Richard Matheson's script is that there are no motivations, no explanations, simply the archetypal rivalry of the road carried to *reductio ad absurdum* heights. At first there are moments of unease—the commercial traveller's name, after all, is Mann—in the telephone call to his wife which suggests a background of marital stress, in the rather coy insistence (shots of disembodied feet lurking under the lorry, of an arm visible at the window) with which his efforts to put a face to his rival are frustrated. But all these hints of allegory

(man's inability to cope with machine-age pressures) are held firmly in check, giving just a touch of abstract meaning to the unseen lorry-driver, just a touch of social fallibility to the ineffectual salesman, and leaving the way free for a simple mortal combat between hunter and hunted in which one can, if one likes, see the huge, lumbering lorry as the dragon, and the glitteringly fragile Plymouth sedan as the prancing, pitifully vulnerable knight in armour.

Adhering strictly to these limits and only once leaving the road (a shot of the wife answering the telephone), Spielberg and Matheson screw the tension almost to breaking point with a series of cunningly contrived incidents which simultaneously reveal the full extent of the lorry-driver's murderous intent and turn the timid salesman into an animal fighting desperately for his life. The gradual, teasing revelation by the lorry that it is playing cat-and-mouse, secure in its ability to out-drive, out-maneuvre and even out-race its prey at every turn; the hallucinating moment at the roadside café when Mann still believes reason can prevail and tries to identify his adversary among the drivers eating peacefully at the counter; the petrol station where he tries to telephone the police and the furious lorry simply charges the phone booth, flattening it and opening a Pandora's box of terrors as it scatters a collection of lizards, tarantulas and rattlesnakes kept as caged pets by the owner. Like Clouzot's *Wages of Fear*, *Duel* may be a once-only film, an exercise in tension which never seems quite so rewarding the second time round; but like *Wages of Fear* and unlike *Les Diaboliques*, it is a film built on legitimate suspense rather than sham trickery.

TOM MILNE

Images

Conceivably, schizophrenia is a malady to which all Robert Altman's major characters have been prone. Their behaviour is of little interest analysed on the level of clues or symptoms, but compelling where it gives evidence of large and dangerous attempts to comprehend an irrational world through personal experience, of minds which escape from the trap of an insane situation by going promptly, appropriately, healthily insane. Broad Laingian concepts of madness as

'Even Dwarfs Started Small'



socially conditioned, as a valid experience of a given situation, are as closely worked out in Altman's tragi-comedies as in the explicit psychiatric challenge of *Family Life*. And perhaps just as such a theory opposes the psychiatric treatment of schizophrenia as a personal, functional disorder, so Altman has always opted for revealing his characters through complex situations rather than psychological puzzles. A precise and restless talent for experiment is evident in his switching through original combinations of comedy and drama, creating each time a complete universe, dense in detail and mood yet transparent to the passage of his characters from some rearguard delusion to eventual resignation and absorption. Self-destruction seems the inevitable conclusion, with the single exception of *M*A*S*H*, where a best possible adjustment is made through more vigorous comedy.

Confronting an absurd situation, Altman's heroes plainly have a right to their schizoid view of the world; while their heroism exists in contrast to those skittering creatures on the periphery—the miners in *McCabe*, the army types in *M*A*S*H*—more comically deluded in what they take to be a comfortable adjustment to a basically reasonable world. For *Images* (Hemdale) the population has been substantially reduced—to a vividly fragmenting personality, Cathryn (Susannah York), her compulsive husband Hugh (Rene Auberjonois), and the small cast of characters, both real and imaginary, who mediate their frighteningly exclusive attitudes and behaviour. Altman has insisted that his intention was not a clinical description of insanity but a reproduction of the world from Cathryn's point of view. And quite rightly—in keeping with Laing's dictum that it is possible to experience another's behaviour but not his experience—Hugh is insensitive to his wife's fantasies to a degree which reduces him to the comic grotesques of the earlier films and removes him to some remotely unfeeling corner of Cathryn's stage.

In his own irascible idiosyncrasies, Hugh might be traced back to *Brewster McCloud* and the blue-eyed, streamlined super-cop from the West Coast who emerges from a car wreck with his cool badly ruffled and one eye now mysteriously revealed to be brown, and promptly shoots himself. Hugh is identified by his repertoire of inane jokes and by a collection of accessories—cigar, camera, fold-away spectacles—which suggest an object fetishism as odd as the cop's loving care of his cashmere sweaters. He seems prey to an exasperating neuroticism more pitiable than his wife's hallucinations.

The film begins with Cathryn alone in the vast apartment which Altman takes pains to situate in some unidentifiable urban limbo, just as the breathtaking pastoral scene to which Cathryn and Hugh eventually retreat is only ever referred through the fairytale geography of the children's story which Cathryn is writing. She is deep in the toils of creation as the credits appear over a series of images which make baffling play with the clutter in the apartment, over what might be real in this litter of fairytale icons (a dusky bound volume, a goblet, a candlestick), and what simply suggestive of darker, less decorative interior landscapes. Such ambiguities become altogether more solid when the couple have moved to their home at Green Cove, where the interior offers disconcerting vistas of massive grey stonework, the overall black and white tones of the modern decor, and the unfinished woodwork of the kitchen furnishings. Such detailing—emphasised by the clarity and controlled colour of Vilmos Zsigmond's photography and Altman's occasional framing of Cathryn in distantly preoccupied corners—transforms the house into another metaphor for her imaginatively chaotic experience. A similar effect is over-applied in the soundtrack readings of her composition (actually taken from Susannah York's own children's story in



'Duel': Dennis Weaver

Search of Unicorns), which are effective in their initial hesitations and false beginnings, but later tie the real setting too closely to the fairytale terms of the story.

An undeniable sense of frustration also infects the development of the film, which is eventually too direct in its communication and too abstract in its moods, insulating the spectator, as much as the other characters, from Cathryn and her predicament. *Images* as a subject has been with Altman since 1968, pre-dating *That Cold Day in the Park*, and since then has inevitably undergone many mutations, the most radical being in the pre-production period when the director overhauled the script in collaboration with his cast. But beneath all the extemporising, *Images* still requires melodrama on the order of *That Cold Day* to set the story off and keep it going—noticeably in the build-up of simple suspense during the opening scene, where Cathryn is persecuted over the telephone by a mysterious voice which she does not recognise as her own, and collapses in hysteria when the

vision of a dead lover suddenly takes the place of her solicitous husband. Altman has grafted on to this his generalised conception of time and place, explicit points about Cathryn's present sexual frustration and past fears, and incorporated a materialised *alter ego* and other imaginary presences into a dramatic chamber piece. The result is a film which works in conventionally tight, psychological situations, rather than opening out into the landscape of the mind which the subject promises, and which *McCabe* and *Mrs. Miller* came closer to achieving.

More successful in pinpointing Cathryn's struggle with her own imaginative realms and the constricting vision of others is a network of detail in the script. Altman adjusted many of the original American idioms when he had decided on an English actress for the heroine, and an occasional tussle over words between Cathryn and Hugh has actually been worked into the dialogue. More substantial is the role of baleful intermediary between husband and wife taken

'Images': Cathryn Harrison, Susannah York





'Jeremiah Johnson': Josh Albee, Robert Redford, Stefan Gierasch

by Hugh's camera, with Cathryn disgustedly rejecting its denatured reproduction of the world, while Hugh seems bound by just such a view of his wife, exploding in rage when his equipment is broken ('You shot my camera!'), then being mollified as they are briefly reconciled ('I'll tell you a secret. I was getting bored with that camera anyway'), only to be found a little later busily fixing his toy.

RICHARD COMBS

Bad Company

'We'll live off the land,' is the proud boast of Jake and his band of amateur brigands as they set off West in flight from conscription in the Union army; and their comically doomed attempt to live a life of roving independence, disdaining the comforts and the laws of organised society, provides the first of numerous points of comparison between *Bad Company* (Paramount) and Robert Benton and David Newman's best known work, the screenplay for *Bonnie and Clyde*. Late in that film, Clyde Barrow is asked by a solicitous friend where the gang is heading for, and gives the wryly succinct reply, 'We ain't headin' nowhere, we're just runnin' from.' Likewise all that Drew, Jake and their robber band have in common is that they are refugees from civilisation. Once they have determined to turn their backs on society, all their actions lead logically to the moment encapsulated in the film's last shot, Drew and Jake 'frozen' as they draw their guns in nervous unison for their first bank raid.

What made *Bonnie and Clyde* distinctive as a 'gangster' film was partly its preference for rural over city settings, partly its sense of a wildly accelerating but ultimately directionless momentum. In rejecting society, the outlaw is reduced either to 'living off the land', surviving as best he can outside the towns and cities, or to becoming an enemy of that society, in which role he will become as busy 'running from' as 'heading for'. *Bad Company* has the same briskly picaresque quality as *Bonnie and Clyde*, presenting its story in a swift, elliptical, comic-strip structure and quickening the audience's pulse with sporadic bursts of country and Western music. At the same time, the dramatic impact of so much movement with so little clear direction is essentially unsatisfying, and if *Bad Company* finally comes a poor second to *Bonnie and Clyde*, it is because as director Robert

Benton has failed to impose his own moral and aesthetic direction on the story. Where Penn gave shape to *Bonnie and Clyde*'s episodic story by constant visual intimations of its tragic outcome (the cloud crossing the cornfield, the cheerless family reunion), *Bad Company* offers merely the episodic story, with some routine seasonal symbolism (summer giving way scene by scene to winter) to provide a perfunctory tragic overlay.

It's a pity, because the film's opening scenes present a masterly lesson in economic story-telling. In no time, we have seen Drew narrowly escape capture by the recruiting Unionist troops; dispatched from his Ohio home with his parents' blessing to seek his fortune in the West; meet Jake and his down-at-heel associates; set off with them for the prosperous West. All this to the accompaniment of voice-over extracts from Drew's inimitably solemn diary: 'I have taken a promise to keep to the straight and narrow so long as I live. It is still a sunny day.' Equally impressive in these early scenes is the film's period sense, Gordon Willis' Technicolor photography imbuing every shot with the grainy texture and exaggerated chiaroscuro of a 19th-century photograph, while Benton and Newman's dialogue is a hilarious Twain-like blend of genteel, educated Southern (Drew's speech and diary extracts) and coarse vernacular (Jake and his cronies).

Once the gang are out in the wilds, however, the film begins unmistakably to fall apart, becoming at times little more than an engaging series of vignettes as the group struggle to make ends meet in terms of money (an attempt to hold up a stage fails when the gang's decoy, instead of halting the coach, coolly climbs in and drives off), food (Jake skins and cleans their first rabbit with mounting and comical distaste), and even sex. When the gang meet a married couple who are driving disconsolately home after an abortive pilgrimage to the golden West, Jake agrees to the husband's offer to hire out his wife to one and all for a bargain ten dollars. Here, as elsewhere, Drew stands aloof, informing Jake defensively that he is 'keeping himself' for his wedding night, and entering demurely in his diary: 'I begin to feel I should find some poor creature to toil with me through life's weary way.'

The thread that almost holds the film together is furnished by the subtly contrasting portraits of Drew and Jake. In the interests of preserving his rigid Methodist integrity, Drew employs every devious ruse—furtively extracting from his own wallet the money he proudly claims to have stolen from a hardware store—to

persuade the gang that he is as accomplished and experienced a crook as they. Jake meanwhile makes no bones about his trade, and is quite happy, once discovering that Drew has double-crossed him, to relieve his friend of the too dollars jealously concealed in his boot. As the two confront each other while Jake waits to be hanged, their roles are at last laconically defined when Jake declares, 'You're the liar, I'm the crook.' But the film's last shot dramatically throws out any nice distinction between one form of dishonest dealing and another. Like the heroes of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*—a film whose style prefigures that of *Bad Company* in its unnerving fluctuations between authenticity and pictorial chic—Drew and Jake are finally 'frozen' in a last, decisive anti-social gesture. Unlike Bonnie and Clyde, however, they seem the heroes of a disappointingly inconclusive epic.

NIGEL ANDREWS

Jeremiah Johnson

Stepping off a barge on the last stage of his journey out of civilisation into the Rocky Mountains, Jeremiah Johnson is introduced as a man of 'proper wit and adventurous spirit... suited to the mountains,' as though this dour green-horn were already plainly on his way into legend. Before the credits have appeared, in fact, Sydney Pollack seems to have set about the kind of mock-epic storytelling by which he has made room within his films for romantic adventure, deep seams of comedy, settings as handsome as nature can provide, and a gallery of characters who have elected to become heroes in their own epic simply by being foolishly human to a delirious degree.

In this determinedly spectacular display of human features, Pollack bears some similarity to Franklin Schaffner, the contemporary who also moved from television into films surprisingly generous in their sense of staging and skilful drawing of plot into poetic drama. But the grand manner in Schaffner looks like wholehearted romanticism, while Pollack often seems to be over-calculating and undercutting his own broad romantic flourishes. He works not so much by sacrificing plot for character as by subjecting both to an intellectualised view of human contradictions. In connection with *Castle Keep*, Pollack has spoken of the warmonger Falconer and the art-lover Beckman as being facets of the same personality; and when he moves away from comedy such a deliberate devising of human qualities results in the portentous allegory of *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*

Jeremiah Johnson (Columbia-Warner) conceivably tells of another battle in man's struggle

'Bad Company': Jeff Bridges



with his own nature. But the conflict is so obliquely introduced that for a while what is most striking about the film is its apparent disconnectedness—a rambling series of incidents and encounters in which Johnson, the tyro mountain man, makes the acquaintance of his bizarre and more experienced brethren and by accident acquires his own incongruous family, when he takes the young survivor of an Indian massacre away from a mother keeping an insane vigil over the graves of her other children, and is later bamboozled by the intricacies of Indian courtesy into taking a squaw for a bride.

Johnson's painful education in the ways of the wild is something like the processes of re-education in *The Scalphunters*; though with its conflicts of lore and learning and quality of serio-comic debate, the latter film had a lively tension which *Jeremiah Johnson* replaces with a loosely strung account of how a fumbling greenhorn is transformed into an awe-inspiring myth. The humour of such episodes of cultural shock as the arrival at the camp of missionary-trained Indians who now have their own crucifix totem and offer their hospitality in French, makes up an amiably picaresque tale. But it is only belatedly that a fruitful antagonism develops, not this time between opposing halves of a multi-faceted personality but between Johnson and the mountainscapes where he struggles to survive.

The concept of Jeremiah Johnson, in fact, could not be further from the mountain man of Vardis Fisher's novel. The triumphant giant whose sense of communion with the wilderness is peculiarly expressed in spontaneous expressions of joy (and a formal education in classical music) disappears in Robert Redford's disgruntled refugee from civilisation. And what the mountains offer is not so much a sanctuary from the man-made world (far from exulting in nature, the mountain men appear preoccupied with the trials of their condition), as simply another arena in which they struggle to adapt their own natures. The opening, incongruous description of Johnson as 'suited to the mountains' becomes ironically true by the end when, after declaring war on the entire Crow nation for the murder of his wife and adopted child, Johnson becomes, for redmen and whitemen alike, a mysterious manifestation of the towering but remotely foreboding landscape. His assimilation is anticipated in a scene near the beginning when, as a hapless novice, Johnson comes upon the corpse of an old mountain man, frozen into a bizarre outcropping amidst the rocks and with a tattered parchment stuck to his chest bequeathing his good buffalo gun to his lucky finder. The details have a certain reverberation through the film; but their development is frustrated by the casually episodic quality of the whole, and some unnecessarily wide-open expanses within the story.

RICHARD COMBS

The Amazing Mr. Blunden

As if to prove that *The Railway Children* was no flash in the pan, Lionel Jeffries has adapted and directed another novel for children. *The Amazing Mr. Blunden* (Hemdale) bears several similarities to E. Nesbit's story. A fatherless family in straitened circumstances, befriended by an elderly gentleman, is suddenly translated to a house in a country village. But this time there is something strange about the benevolent gentleman, Mr. Blunden (Laurence Naismith). He is a ghost, and the house in the country is a broken-down mansion, reputed to be haunted. The young brother and sister, James and Lucy, soon discover the source of the haunting to be two children who had lived in the mansion a hundred years earlier and died in a terrible fire. The ghost children beg the help of the newcomers, who agree to travel back in time with

the aid of a useful potion and try to help change the course of the tragedy.

The opening sequences—London streets at Christmas, the family in a squalid flat, Mr. Blunden appearing like a good fairy out of the snow—is pleasantly Dickensian. The time is 1918, and the period is established with that flair for precise detail which is a feature of Jeffries' style. His serious, non-condescending approach draws marvellously matter-of-fact performances from all four children, but he can hardly claim credit for the work of a baby who effortlessly steals every scene he appears in.

Jeffries' laconic method assumes acceptance of the supernatural with an agreeable common sense which stays on the safe side of smugness, and his ghosts are splendidly solid. Unfortunately, this down to earth attitude is not quite consistently followed. While the ghost children are in a sense as true to life as their living friends, their wicked uncle and his confederates are caricatures from a nightmare. This is obviously a deliberate effect, perhaps intended to offset fear by its very unreality, but it is miscalculated. These grotesques (including Diana Dors, overplaying wildly as a wicked housekeeper) are not quite absurd enough to be funny and too repellent to amuse. But the fire which is the adventure's climax is real enough, and handled with an almost Hitchcockian screwing of suspense. While it can be enjoyed in the comfortable conviction that all will come right in the end, the happy conclusion is withheld for an agonising length of time. This determination to get full value out of the material without dilution or sentimentality is perhaps the key to Jeffries' success. It is a compliment to child audiences which their parents will appreciate.

BRENDA DAVIES

Two Gallants

On bad days I think the telly critics have the best of it. There was the generally refreshing excellence of Granada's *Country Matters* and, some while ago now, those D. H. Lawrence adaptations. Mini-cinema, maybe, and a far cry from the ambitious productions of Italian RAI-TV, but straws in the wind for all that. Questions of scale apart, the days are past when one could confidently assign films made for the big and small screens to their respective pigeon-holes. The visual traffic is two-way. What one can say is that television increasingly offers chances to make subjects of a length considered unpalatable to cinema audiences. High time that the pick of these films—for what else are they but films?—got the further consideration they deserve.

Gavin Millar's *Two Gallants* is a case very much in point. It is the splendid first fruit of a new BBC-2 project trailered in the Autumn SIGHT AND SOUND's 'In the Picture': a series of 20-30 minute conversions of short stories drawn from Joyce's *Dubliners* and from Chekhov, to be co-produced by Gavin Millar and Melvyn Bragg and adapted and directed by various hands, some experienced, others new to the game. (Of *Full House*, the long, long arts magazine into which these brief features are now and then to be slotted, it is too early to say more than that it's terrible.) The Joyce story, written in 1906 and a late entry for the *Dubliners* collection, ran into particular trouble in its day from outraged printers and a nervous publisher. It wasn't till 1914, in fact, that the book finally appeared. Hindsight renders this caution ridiculous, but Millar must have had his own, quite different troubles in adapting the tale.

Terse, elegant, it follows two seedy blades through a turn-of-the-century Dublin evening: Corley, the thick, self-absorbed womaniser, and Lenehan, his fawning companion. In terms of plot, all hinges on a last disclosure, when smug Corley returns from an assignation with a besotted slavey to reveal his small, ungente-

manly spoils. The story beautifully builds to this (which is presumably what so dismayed those printers); its concern, though, is rather with the characters of its 'gallants' and, most notably, with a portrait of the eternal leech, Lenehan. Between the early boasting and buttering-up exchanges and the quick, final meeting, mission accomplished, Lenehan is left to his own poor devices. This is where Millar turns up trumps, both as adapter and director, making Lenehan's walkabout—window-gazing, relishing a plate of peas in a run-down refreshment bar, exchanging vacant pleasantries with acquaintances on the street—count for interest and insight into the man every step of the way.

Donal McCann is well found as the ladykiller delivering his judicious vulgarities ('She's a fine decent tart . . . that's what she is'); Derry Power, yachting cap, sly merriment, anxious eyes and all, is now inexpungably Lenehan, his jauntiness a blink away from melancholy. Millar helps this astonishing performance by the attention he gives to Georgian locations (the 28-minute film was shot over nine nights) and by the magnificently subdued colour photography; a necessary male harpist and a tram were disinterred from God knows where. All the Joyce is here, and the juice. If I had to single out a couple more inspired strokes, I suppose they would be the use of an Offenbach overture, its febrile gaiety a perfect mirror of the prevailing tone, and the simple audacity of introducing a narrator's voice-over when the images can't go it alone. Gavin Millar is known to admire Truffaut, another director who doesn't scruple to avail himself of the full range of devices to a film-maker's hand. As one who mistrusts 'pure' cinema, being uncertain as to its meaning, I can only applaud this rich, subtle conversion which takes, to echo Lenehan, 'the solitary, unique, and if I may so call it, *recherché* biscuit!'

JOHN COLEMAN

London Festival 1972 from page 8

The *pièce de résistance*, for instance, is the school play, specially rewritten and designed to spread terror through the school. A wild and woolly amalgam of *Faust*, blasphemy and medical-student japey (whose main delight on the side is that it features a bizarre Hound of the Baskervilles which subsequently haunts the school by night with ferocious intent), it succeeds only in spreading alarm among the inoffensive younger boys, and has whatever teeth it possesses drawn by a round of indulgent applause from the assembled clergy. The rout is finally completed when Transeunti musters his troops for a grand alliance between pupils and servants, only to find them split by class and economic barriers.

The real sting comes in the tail when Transeunti, after making a last gesture by chopping down the 'miraculous pear-tree' in the garden with the assistance of an idiot servant who is obsessed by dreams of another planet, shakes the dust of the school off his feet, leaving it to sink comfortably back into its mire. Driving in a gleaming convertible down the deserted highway—no people to disrupt the beautiful simplicity of dreams—Transeunti asks the idiot beside him about his planet, and platitudes about a future Utopia mingle with his own pious hopes for order through power. With imagination and intellect equally bankrupt, what price a brave new world?

TOM MILNE

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PLEASURE DOME: The Collected Film Criticism of Graham Greene, 1935-1940

Edited by John Russell Taylor

SECKER AND WARBURG, £3.50

'Life as it is, life as it ought to be,' wrote Chekhov about the function of the novel. Graham Greene quotes this dictum three times in the course of his collected film reviews, applying it in each case to his ideal of cinema. His clarion call to the stars and studios of America and England during the Thirties when he was critic for the *Spectator* and *Night and Day* is for more reality, more accuracy—more truth, no less.

The Pleasure Dome would be interesting anyway for the light it throws on the creative obsessions of Greene the novelist, and later the screenwriter. At the time these reviews were being written he was himself struggling with life as it is, life as it ought to be, in the form of *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory* and *A Gun for Sale*. It is not surprising that he responds with such warmth to Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko*:

'In this film we do not forget the real subject in a mass of detail: the freedom loving human spirit trapped and pulling at the chain. A simple subject, but fiction does not demand complex themes, and the story of a man at liberty to move only in one shabby, alien quarter when his heart is in another place widens out to touch the experience of exile common to everyone . . . We are aware . . . of a film which is really trying to translate into dramatic terms the irrelevancies, the grotesque wit, the absurd, the passionate tangle of associations which make up the mind.'

This might be an enthusiastic review of one of Greene's own early novels. The preoccupations of his imagination, as we now know them with the gift of hindsight, appear forcibly, at times almost parodically. Writing in 1935 of the shortcomings of Technicolor, he says: 'It must be made to contribute to our sense of truth. The machine gun, the cheap striped tie, the battered Buick and the shabby bar . . . Can Technicolor reproduce with the necessary accuracy the suit that has been worn too long, the oily hat?'

Notice Greene's strenuous use of the definite article, and notice that 'must'; he is marking out his moral territory. In his philosophy, life as it ought to be often implies an inverted romanticism, a sentimental puritanism—qualities which

pollute so much of his fiction for me. It is as if there is something inherently more truthful and serious about the oily hat and the striped tie than about a crimson velvet ball dress.

He castigates the sentimentality and triviality of Hollywood with wit and ferocity, yet his most valuable gift as a critic is his understanding of the uniqueness of the cinema as an art: the way it combines popularity and privacy; its capacity to incorporate an audience in the action. Here he is, at his very best, on another Duvivier film, *Un Carnet de Bal*:

'Nostalgia, sentiment, regret: the padded and opulent emotions wither before the evil detail: the camera shoots at a slant so that the dingy flat rears like a sinking ship. You have to struggle to the door, but you can run down hill to the medical couch and the bead curtains.'

This is bravura descriptive writing, imaginative analysis and a poignant prophetic sketch for Greene's own screenplays written after the war. The pet snake flushed down the lavatory by the jealous butler's wife in *The Fallen Idol*; the eiderdowned crone squaling incomprehensible German at Holly Martins as she ascends the staircase in *The Third Man*—these are the evil details which harrow us in his scripts.

He is acute about Hitchcock, whom he justly accuses of an inadequate sense of reality: 'Very perfunctorily he builds up to . . . tricky situations (paying no attention on the way to inconsistencies, loose ends, psychological absurdities) and then drops them: they mean nothing: they lead to nothing.' He is wrong about Garbo: 'That magnificent mare's head of hers will puzzle our descendants seeking a more obvious beauty.' And he is no less than coarsely perverse about Shakespeare's (rather than Reinhardt's) *Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'I have little affection for the play, which seems to me to have been written with a grim determination on Shakespeare's part to earn for once a Universal Certificate.'

The articles are rarely longer than eight hundred words, and Greene manages the constrictions of his quota triumphantly: he is a consummate aphoristic journalist. But his jokes, like his extended comedies such as *Our Man in Havana* or *Travels with My Aunt*, are often laboured and immature. Except, that is, when they are creatively critical, as in his piece

about *The Petrified Forest*:

'"Dramatise, dramatise," one longs to remind Mr. Sherwood, as more and more the concrete fact—the gun, the desert, the killer—give place to Life, Love, Nature . . . it is as if Othello had met the armed men outside the door not with "Put up your bright swords or the dew will rust them," but with some such sentence as: "Nature, my men, is having her revenge. You can't defeat Nature with your latest type of swords and daggers. She comes back every time in the shape of neuroses, jealousies . . ." and had let Desdemona and the affairs of Venice, Iago and the one particular handkerchief, vanish before Women, Life, Sex . . .'

Students and aficionados of Greenery will be delighted by the references to their author's favourite authors, Chekhov, James, Ford Maddox Ford, which abound in the text, but any reader will be puzzled and irritated by the production of *The Pleasure Dome*. The index does not contain an entry for any of the three writers mentioned above. There is no contents page, and no editorial preface. Instead we have a black and white coffee-table book, scattered with otiose stills from the films under review, unwieldy and expensive. Better to wait for the paperback.

Greene himself contributes a brief but characteristically sly introduction. He stumbled upon his job, he tells us, 'after the dangerous third Martini.' He finds many of his prejudices 'modified now only by a sense of nostalgia.' This is an honest indictment of his failings, and substantiates my own feeling that though his criticism is consistently readable and occasionally profound, it is far from the achievements of James Agee, or of Pauline Kael and some others now writing. But we, of course, have hindsight, more time and a little more space. We are not yet Collected Works.

JULIAN JEBB

ALL THE BRIGHT YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema

By Josef Skvorecký

Translated by Michael Schonberg
PETER MARTIN ASSOCIATES/TAKE ONE,
TORONTO, \$8.95

After 1958 we all began to see films from Czechoslovakia that we admired. Soon we learned to rely on certain directors' names as guarantees of work with individuality and inventiveness, quite fresh voices on the international film scene. At first we watched for the signatures of Weiss and Zeman, then Jasný and Forman and Kadár, and then, finally (?), Chytilová and Némec and Passer and Menzel. Three years ago a curtain descended on this stage full of accomplishment and promise; we heard about films, shelved or stopped, that we would never see, and of Czech film-makers trying to continue their careers abroad.

Josef Skvorecký's book gives us fully, for the first time, the context for those films and their makers, how they came into being—and what was behind the descending curtain. After reading his book one can never again think of them as separate works and artists. They came from an intense and determined joint effort of Czech intellectuals, the history of which Skvorecký is peculiarly qualified to write, since he and his books occupied a key place in the past excited decade of Czech cinema. (In a separation that sounds strange to us, he mentions that his book does not pretend to describe the course of Slovak films, as he does not know the details of Bratislava's productions. As for Prague and the Barrandov Studio, he seems to know everything worth knowing.) Official opposition to his first novel, *The Cowards* (finally published in 1958, ten years after it was written), can be identified with the first significant collisions between authority and the 'daring young men and women' moving from the Film Academy into Barrandov. Skvorecký wrote five of the films and promoted others, unmade, as well as constantly prodding his film friends into their best efforts. What happened to them at home and in Prague's cafés is also a vital part of his story.

For prelude, Skvorecký gives a concise history of the Czech film before the last war, with fine, informal portraits of the great satirists then—Vlasta Burian, Voskovec and Werich, Hugo Haas. The years of German occupation, a time of feverish activity, are quietly passed over; he gives us only glimpses of the mistakes and victims of those years. He is eager to leave the 'Grandfathers and Fathers' (his first chapter) and get to his own generation.

The nationalisation of the film industry was the first step towards both triumphs and troubles. Within a few years the authorities were confronted by an irritating paradox: 'The State was financing its own critics.' It is possible that the State underestimated the social role of films. Backed by the creators of the country's literature, music and design, the power of the film was formidable: 'In Czechoslovakia, films and literature are not just entertainment on different levels of sophistication, nor are they the subject of snobbish conversation, as is all too frequently the case in the West. They play an important part in the lives of wide masses.' Skvorecký shows the gathering forces that became the 'Czech New Wave', the constant push-pull of artists versus administrators, the film studio's relation to changing political powers, those who played safe and those who risked everything in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to put their beliefs on to film.

As this movement—one of the vital intellectual dramas of post-war Europe—took shape, the central information of this history is opened to us. Chapter Three,

'A Portrait of the Artists as Young Men and Women', begins with the struggling rise of Milos Forman, and the emergence of Forman's assistant, Ivan Passer. The next portrait is of Vera Chytilová, the philosopher film-maker and perhaps the boldest experimenter. We've heard little of Ester Krumbachová, but now we can see the important creative role she played as designer and writer. The most tragic of Skvorecký's portraits is of Jan Němec. His trials and anguish have turned the maker of *Diamonds in the Night* and *The Party and the Guests* into a helpless invalid, perhaps never again able to make any kind of film.

There are other directors in Skvorecký's book: Menzel (*Closely Watched Trains*), Schorm (*End of a Priest*), Jires (*The Cry*), Juracek (*Joseph Kilián*), Schmidt, Masa, Bocan, Brynych, Kachyna. What will such independent talents do, now that controls from the top have tightened so painfully? Skvorecký makes no prophecy, but he reminds us that the old antagonists of the young film-makers—inertia, silence and misused authority—have waited for this moment to pounce. Certainly the old taboos, to protect the audience from new forms, satire, ambiguity, are back in renewed force.

Sympathy and irony are the two dominant tones of Skvorecký's writing. There are sarcastic allusions to events—the Banska Bystrica conference, for example—that non-Czechs might have preferred to know about more concretely, especially as this took place on the eve of the triumphant years. Irony and local allusions are usually the first victims of translation. This clever, sharp book is blunted, to an unfortunate degree, by its translator, its editor and its proof-reader. Canada's film books are so rare that this could have been a model to follow if more care had been spent on 'unimportant' details. Nevertheless, for the patient and inquiring reader, this 'personal history' is a treasure.

JAY LEYDA

JEAN VIGO

By P. E. Salles Gomes

SECKER & WARBURG, £3.50 and £1.90

JEAN VIGO

By John M. Smith

NOVEMBER BOOKS, £1.70 and 85p.

Originally published in 1957, *Jean Vigo* by P. E. Salles Gomes has always been considered the definitive work on its subject, and it has been the starting point for almost all subsequent Vigo research. Several books have been published since 1957 (most recently Pierre Lherminier's study in the *Cinéma d'aujourd'hui* series), all relying for their factual information on the painstaking research of their Brazilian forerunner, now available for the first time in an English translation.

Salles Gomes tells the full story.

He begins with a chapter devoted to Vigo's father, the anarchist journalist Miguel Almereyda. For a reader anxious to reach the core of the book, this prelude may seem tiresome. Almereyda's bewildering succession of political vicissitudes and the maze of French radical politics prior to the Great War are, in themselves, of only minor importance to the later development of the child Vigo who lived through them. Considering the minutiae of Salles Gomes' findings, one is surprised that so little emerges of Vigo's own reactions (admittedly more difficult to ascertain) to this very unsettling period of his life.

The crucial schoolboy years at Millau and Chartres are chronicled in detail; but although this was the period later to be faithfully reconstructed in *Zéro de Conduite*, one may question the value of learning that, 'On the first day Jean was a bit uneasy and wondered how the other pupils would treat him and whether he would be well fed.' Such tiny anecdotal details, which pepper the book, eventually become merely an irritation. On the other hand, the accounts of the making of Vigo's films are both fascinating and illuminating. The problem-fraught machinery of small-budget production is here described down to the last light-meter. Every alteration to the script, each new approach, the inspired improvisations and subsequent deletions, provide a clear indication of Vigo's rigorous methods and unswerving ideology. And this is Salles Gomes' important contribution to our understanding.

As a critic, Salles Gomes functions best when confronted by the criticism of others. His attitude to Vigo is one of relentless admiration, but analysis of Vigo's 'poetry' (to which he continually refers) is reserved for one or two salient sequences. The book ends, however, with a lengthy review of the critical attention paid to Vigo's films; and in the very last pages, in a virtuoso demolition job on the 1949 views of Glauco Viazzi, Salles Gomes reveals the full force of a perception which until this point has been regrettably muted.

Where Salles Gomes dives into every nook and cranny of factual information, John M. Smith treads water in the dangerous eddies of hypothesis. Quite legitimately, he bases his judgments on the visual evidence of the films themselves; a method which, especially in Vigo's case, may however prove inadequate. He says almost nothing of the autobiographical importance of *Zéro de Conduite*, fails to acknowledge the crucial contribution of Boris Kaufman (Kaufman has stressed the unique creative partnership he shared with Vigo), and completely underestimates Vigo's own temperament and personality. Mr. Smith does make some valuable observations, but his determination to construe 'significance' from Vigo's imagery and thematic consistencies finally

leaves one gasping with incredulity.

Whatever the meaning of the hole in the road (towards the end of *A Propos de Nice*), it certainly is not 'the goal of the sexually searching chimneys.' Vigo prefers to expose his emotions through that 'physical honesty' which Mr. Smith correctly ascribes to the muscle-flexing torso in another sequence from the same film. Nor is the pile of logs (at the side of the canal in the opening sequences of *L'Atalante*) anything more than a pile of logs. To suggest that their implication as fuel 'establishes, on a plot level, the nature of the barge's calling near the village' is simply pedantic. The book is bedevilled with similarly misleading and unfounded suggestions. Are we to believe, for example, that the sea-plane in *A Propos de Nice* is unable to take flight because it is a figment of the 'sterile' imagination of the man who 'sees' it? Or that the atrocious acting of the assistant principal towards the end of *Zéro de Conduite* (which even Vigo's direction can do nothing to conceal) indicates the character's recognition of the boys' revolt as 'a victory for his own best impulses'? Interpretations such as these could surely be extended ad infinitum. Might we one day hope to find some structural significance in the usherette's tray?

Mr. Smith's findings might be said to complement those of Salles Gomes. But having read

the earlier of the two books, it is difficult to give credence to the other. Salles Gomes, together with the many published testimonies of friends and acquaintances, at least gives us a fair indication of Vigo's character. Knowing this, and accepting the evidence of the films, it is hard not to find Mr. Smith's subcutaneous analysis cold, distant and disconcertingly off the mark.

If the two books finally coincide, it is in their inability to come to grips with Vigo's surrealism. Salles Gomes thrusts the idea firmly aside in a few lines; Mr. Smith never tackles it. And yet the films of Jean Vigo, through their articulation of what Paul Eluard called 'l'évidence poétique', constitute a dazzling confirmation of the power revolt, the realisation of desire, and the existence of the marvellous. 'The surrealists' ideal,' to quote J. H. Matthews in *Surrealism and Film*, 'is the attainment of aspirations which current circumstances combine to deny us. This entails a review of reality, a revised sense of what is real. Even when they do not address themselves to the question of the role of the real in films, at the source of the concept of cinematographic poetry defended by all surrealists is anticipation of "une réalité réhaussée": reality raised to a new level of significance, more in accord with the inner needs of man.'

BRIAN MILLS

D. W. Griffith

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This book traces the rise and fall of the complex and flamboyant artist who transformed the movie industry from a novelty attraction to a powerful entertainment medium. D. W. Griffith produced and directed *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance*, *Broken Blossoms*, and *Orphans of the Storm*. He launched Mary Pickford, Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Lionel Barrymore, and other stars. But he ended his film career in obscurity, isolated from the industry he had helped to create.

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THE INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF FILM

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Apart from Peter Graham's useful little *Dictionary of the Cinema*, there has been no English language equivalent of the massive Italian *Filmlexicon* or the various and variously useful French compendia. The English-speaking cinéaste wanting to check a title or a date or a director has had to thumb through a number of limited and often conflicting sources, like the industry year books, the Spring Books pictorial histories, and more recently the index to Andrew Sarris' *American Cinema*. Now the gap is filled twofold, with the

almost simultaneous publication of two general encyclopaedias.

The *World* encyclopaedia, seven years in the making, claims to be 'the most comprehensive film encyclopaedia available in any language.' It depends, of course, on what you mean by 'comprehensive', and the claim begins to seem a little misleading when the editors, Tim Cawkwell and John M. Smith (the work was initiated by Ian Cameron, who has since left Studio Vista), admit in their introduction that the silent cinema is under-represented and the focus is on the 'choice of directors'. The *International* encyclopaedia makes no such claim, and indeed its scope and its purpose are different: a general encyclopaedia which aims at readability as well as usefulness as a work of reference. The tone is set in the introductory essay by the general editor (Roger

Manvell), a potted history of the cinema which finds its echo in the main body of the work in general articles on animation, Indian film and the development of colour cinematography (a long and valuable essay by Brian Coe).

The difference between the two books can perhaps best be illustrated by a comparative exercise. Look up Mitchell Leisen in the *World* encyclopaedia and you find a seventeen-line biography and a complete filmography; the adjoining entries include Janet Leigh, Roger Leenhardt and Jean-Pierre Lefèbvre (which the *International* spells Lefèbre). The *International* gives Leisen twenty-two lines, describing his 'smoothly sophisticated ironic style' and mentioning only six of his films; neither Janet Leigh nor Roger Leenhardt are listed on the same pages, but there is an entry for Lebanon referring

the reader to a page-long article on Arab film.

In other words, the usefulness of these encyclopaedias depends on the use you want to make of them. The *World* volume provides a detailed biography of D. W. Griffith and a complete list of his films after 1914; but turn to the *International* if you want to know the basics of Griffith's style and technical innovations. Both volumes include a number of errors (sloppy proof-reading responsible for a lot of them in the *World*); the *International* is better designed (one picture often says as much as a thousand words, and the *International* has more scope for displaying stills to advantage); the *World* is more useful as a work of reference, and has a better index. At current prices, both encyclopaedias are good value for money.

DAVID WILSON

Letters

Capra Revisited

SIR,—A season of Frank Capra films opens shortly at the National Film Theatre in the wake of the English publication of Capra's autobiography, *The Name Above the Title*. Many of the reviews of the book in this country were less than ecstatic, possibly as a reaction to the rather gushing praise that the work has gathered in the United States. Unfortunately there has been a general tendency, particularly noticeable in Elliott Stein's article 'Capra Counts His Oscars' (SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer, 1972) to denigrate much of Capra's film career along with his literary efforts.

First, as to the book itself, anybody who looks for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in any autobiography, be it written by politician, sportsman or film director, is destined to disappointment. The fact that Capra misremembers interviews with Harry Cohn, and errs in his recall of casting and in his labelling of captions, should not be considered surprising. The rigorous standard of scholarship cannot really be applied to a work of personal reminiscence, however much one may wish it. When Mr. Stein castigates Capra's 'solipsistic reveries' and then immediately asks us to compare them to Bob Thomas' anecdotal *King Cohn*, one can but wonder at his definition of an acceptable film book.

One sometimes feels that Mr. Stein in his review is trying to rewrite Capra in this journalistic fashion. In the middle of a list of

Capra's literary shortcomings he bemoans the destruction of the first two reels of *Lost Horizon* because these '... involved the burning of Baskul, perhaps the greatest action sequence the man filmed.' How, one may rightly inquire, was this judgment arrived at, since only the audiences at the studio and Santa Barbara previews could conceivably have known the content, let alone the quality, of the first half-hour?

Apart from these instances of eccentricity, Mr. Stein's most serious mistake is to align the book's predictable egocentricity with a similar tendency in Capra's movies, implying that, since in literary terms the pretentiousness is offensive, the movies themselves suffer from similar excesses. This is a familiar simplification worn thin by popularisers. To prove his point Mr. Stein falls into the elementary academic trap of quoting out of context. He is of the opinion that after *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, Capra 'would never again be capable of a film as funny as *The Strong Man*, as lovable as *Rain or Shine*, as tastefully erotic as *The Platinum Blonde*, as great as *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* ... or simply as exciting as *Dirigible*.' To justify these assertions he quotes Alistair Cooke's review of *Mr. Deeds* (recently republished in *Garbo and the Nightwatchmen*) in which Cooke felt Capra was '... on his way out; he's started to make films about themes instead of about people.'

But Cooke went on to cite as an example of what Capra had forsaken, the sequence in *Broadway Bill* where Dan exchanges his cane for a hamburger, to the disgust of the stall proprietor, whereupon Happy remarks, 'Whaddya expect for a hamburger—a telegraph pole?' Mr. Stein ignores *Broadway Bill* altogether, presumably because its artistic deficiencies upset his thesis.

One can hardly believe that Mr. Stein is serious in his preference for rarely seen trivia to acknowledged masterpieces. No doubt in

a similar situation he would contend that the derivative, tedious early works of Shakespeare are unjustly neglected and that after 1595 the writer would never again be capable of something as hilarious as *Love's Labour's Lost* or simply as exciting as *Henry VI Part I*. The five films that Capra made between 1936 (*Mr. Deeds*) and 1941 (*Meet John Doe*) will remain classic examples of the successful attempt to blend entertainment and serious endeavour within the rigorous framework of a commercial industry. As a result of these movies Capra will surely rank as perhaps the most important American film-maker of the 1930s. Better than any of his contemporaries, he captured on film a national mood and conveyed it with sincerity, if also with sentiment. This explains why his post-war efforts never achieved the success that seemed to be his by right during the Thirties. Removed from the social and economic conditions that had given significant impetus to his films, Capra tried to stem the tide of history and was surprised when he failed. *It's a Wonderful Life* spends most of its time in flashback as if the director were afraid to come to grips with the present, while *Riding High* and *A Pocketful of Miracles* were unhappy remakes of earlier successes.

Had Capra in fact continued to make *Rain or Shine* and *Dirigibles*, can one really believe that he would have been anything other than a competent director of undistinguished pictures? By denying Capra his 'conceit' Mr. Stein is cutting off his nose to spite his face. Not even Edward Arnold, Mr. Stein, would wish that fate on you.

Yours faithfully,
Cambridge COLIN SHINDLER

Eisenstein's English

SIR,—Lotte Eisner's point about Eisenstein as linguist (SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn, 1972): of course Eisenstein spoke fluently in Rus-

sian, German, French, English and Spanish. He read exhaustively and with complete understanding in all five. (And had a smattering of Japanese.) His writing in any of them is not so hot, especially when he was in a hurry or searching for new categories of aesthetic expression, for he sometimes seemed to be thinking in all of them at once and continually extending and adapting words to embody new meanings.

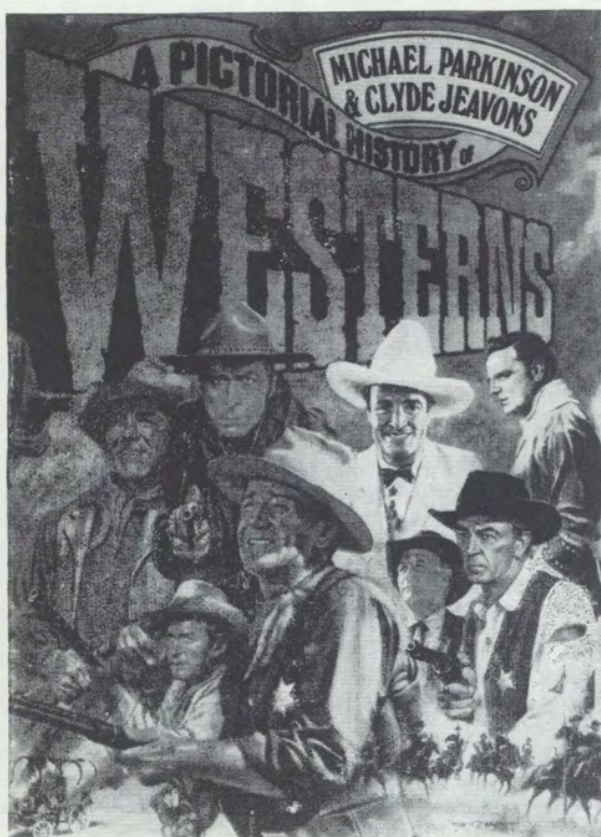
Once I remember two old ladies, who called after a lecture he had given for the University of Southern California, saying how interesting it had been, but that it would have been still more interesting if it had been in English. Of course it had been in English, and brilliantly eloquent at that—but no doubt had included a great many aesthetic, philosophic and scientific terms which the old ladies (and in a few cases perhaps everyone) had never heard uttered before. I well remember his going out to spend a day (or was it an evening?) with Capra, and very much looking forward to it and enjoying it because Capra was a man whose work he very much admired. In his enthusiasm he may well have taken the brakes off and it may have had the same effect as on the old ladies. But pidgin—no. This in no language.

Yours faithfully,
IVOR MONTAGU
Garston, Watford, Herts.

Movie Gallery

SIR,—Because it is fashionable to give immediate praise and publicity to the work of Henri Langlois, there is a tendency to push into the background the work of others in the same field. David Robinson's report on Langlois' Musée du Cinéma was interesting, but I would like to point out that there has been in Los Angeles for some years now a similar exhibition, and regrettably few know of its existence.

The exhibition is the Movie Gallery at the Los Angeles County



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Museum of Natural History on Exposition Boulevard, which was set up by the Museum's Associate Curator of American Western History, John Dewar. I will not attempt to express the visual charm of the Gallery, but content myself with listing some of the items on display. Aside from such mundane items as Vitaphone discs, original posters, lobby cards, early Walter Lantz and Disney cels, Edison Kinetoscopes and original costume designs, the visitor may view original items from *The Lost World*, including background sketches for the scenic artists; one of the ape models used in *King Kong*; Technicolor's first 3-strip camera; Chaplin's costume from *Modern Times*; Lon Chaney's make-up kit and his costume from *The Penalty*; Marie Dressler's costume from *Anna Christie*; Harold Lloyd's spectacles; Shirley Temple's shoes; Fred Astaire's tap shoes from *Top Hat*; Mae Murray's costumes from *The Merry Widow*; Mary Pickford's costume from *Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall*, not to mention her curls (!); letters from W. K. L. Dickson concerning his association with Edison (not noted, incidentally, by Gordon Hendricks); original sketches by the co-founder of the Vitagraph Company, J. Stuart Blackton; a model of the railroad station used in the Charles Laughton version of *Ruggles of Red Gap*; etc., etc., etc.

Apart from the material on display, the Museum also has a vast

quantity of books, programmes, posters and stills, which would put to shame the collections of many archives.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY SLIDE

Kingston upon Thames, Surrey.

John Grierson

SIR,—With the approval of Mrs. Grierson, I am preparing a biography of her late husband, John Grierson, founder of the British documentary movement and of the National Film Board of Canada. It will be published by Faber & Faber.

I would be grateful to see any letters or papers concerning him, which will be treated with care and quickly returned. Relevant material from friends and associates will be particularly welcome.

Yours faithfully,
H. FORSYTH HARDY

14 Greenhill Gardens,
Edinburgh 10.

Edgar Wallace and King Kong

SIR,—I am surprised that Mr. Basil Copper in his letter in your Autumn issue goes to such lengths to defend Edgar Wallace against Mr. Merian Cooper's charge that 'not a single idea' of Wallace's was used in the film *King Kong*.

If Edgar Wallace needs a defence, a second-hand bookshop is the place to find it. In June 1927, Edgar Wallace published *The Avenger*. One of the stars of this amazing tale is a very emotional

orang-outang who not only ascends buildings but chases swooning young ladies. A dead ringer, in fact, for the enlarged ape featured some few years later in a film Edgar Wallace is known to have been connected with.

I am no film historian like Mr. Copper, still less am I an ex-employee of Radio-Keith-Orpheum like Mr. Cooper; I am just someone who for years has enjoyed reading Mr. Wallace's preposterous stories. In this capacity, I offer *The Avenger* as proof that its author's ideas were well used by whoever wrote *King Kong*.

Yours faithfully,
MALCOLM GLUCK

London, N.6

Sight and Sound

As announced in the Autumn 1972 issue, the price of SIGHT AND SOUND was to be increased from January, 1973. Because of the Government's prices and incomes standstill, this increase has been postponed for U.K. subscribers. Annual subscribers in the U.K. who have already paid at the increased rate will be credited with 30p against their next subscription. Alternatively, a refund will be given if requested.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-WARNER for *A Safe Place*, *The Candidate*, *Jeremiah Johnson*.
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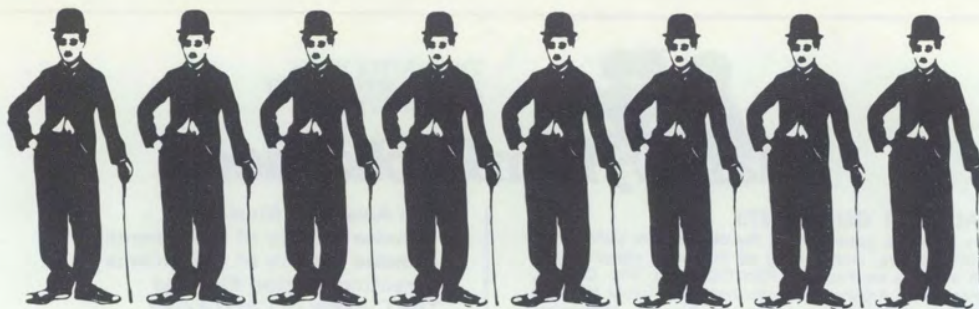
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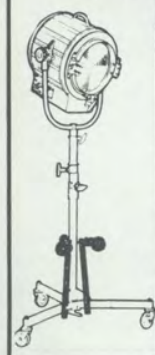
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FILM GUIDE

**AGNUS DEI

(Academy/Connoisseur)
Jancsó on the Hungarian plain, with soldiers, horses, epileptic priests and naked girls choreographed into a kind of mystery play about the continuity of fanaticism and unreason. An oppressive, difficult, sometimes baffling extension of Jancsó's mental landscape (*Red Psalm* is much more accessible), shot with a spectacularly circling camera. (József Madarasz, Márk Zala, Daniel Olbrychski.)

*ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

(Fox)
Blithely ignoring Jonathan Miller's post-Freudian TV *Alice*, William Sterling's musical version is mainly for the kids. The songs are uniformly unmemorable, but there is compensation in colourful sets and an entertainingly star-studded cast, especially Michael Hordern's lachrymose Mock Turtle. (Fiona Fullerton, Ralph Richardson, Peter Sellers.)

**AMAZING MR. BLUNDEN, THE

(Hemdale)
A ghost story for children with an almost Dickensian flavour. Lionel Jeffries again shows a sure touch with youngsters, though his villains (including Diana Dors) are much larger than life. (Laurence Naismith, James Villiers, Dorothy Alison.) Reviewed.

BEN

(Cinerama)
Sequel to *Willard* in which the rat pack set out on a city-wide rampage. Phil Karlson sketches the social terror in a few terse night-time encounters and a final holocaust of fire and water, but the thriller takes a back seat to some maudlin plotting. (Lee Harcourt Montgomery, Joseph Campanella.)

**CANDIDATE, THE

(Columbia-Warner)
Robert Redford as the liberal ideal, not so much corrupted as turned to marshmallow by the merchandising processes of an election campaign. Michael Ritchie's ironic play on the surfaces of his subject suggests just where the ice is thinnest, but with its sidelong glances at real life politicking, the film is eventually overtaken by the kind of dissipation that undermines its hero. (Peter Boyle, Melvyn Douglas.) Reviewed.

CROSS AND THE SWITCH-BLADE, THE

(Fox)
Country preacher descends on the Bronx to sort out teenage gangs, the drugs problem and sundry local difficulties. Honourable intentions ill served by a script which too complacently takes religious salvation for a panacea. (Pat Boone, Erik Estrada, Jackie Giroux; director, Don Murray.)

**DEATH LINE

(Rank)
A striking, stylish horror film which locates its dark deeds inspirationally in the London Underground, where a scabby monster terrorises late-night passengers to Russell Square. Measured direction and sombre photography keep absurdity at bay, while above ground Donald Pleasence's tetchy police inspector provides well-judged comic relief. (Norman Rossington, David Ladd; director, Barry Sherman.)

**DUEL

(CIC)
Man pits his wits (miserably blunted by civilisation) and his machinery (which will take him just so far) against the irrational violence of a King Kong-type road hog. Contemporary phobias are wickedly honed to the point of the film's one outlandish conflict, with precision the keynote in script, direction and Dennis Weaver's hounded urbanite. (Director, Steven Spielberg.) Reviewed.

**DYN AMO

(Other Cinema)
Steve Dwoskin's hallucinatory meditation on women as sex objects. Intense, anxious and progressively disturbing as the mostly static camera strips the masks from four faces of women. (Linda Marlowe, Jenny Runacre.)

**FELLINI'S ROMA

(United Artists)
Fellini's episodic essay on the eternal city, with all the familiar preoccupations on parade, and all the gusto and egotism. Some dazzling, characteristic sequences, including the wartime music hall, the excavation of a subterranean Roman villa, and the motorbike night ride.

*FUZZ

(United Artists)
Engaging though not wholly successful Ed McBain burlesque, with cops disguised as nuns, police dogs who won't give chase and Raquel Welch sharing a sleeping bag in a stake-out. The violence doesn't jell with the slapstick, which overshadows McBain's procedural detail, but there are some funny moments. (Burt Reynolds, Jack Weston; director, Richard Colla.)

GLASS HOUSE, THE

(Scotia-Barber)
Prison melodrama so heavily loaded that good guys and bad guys flaunt their allegiance like lapel-buttons. Made for TV, and striving to say something significant about the system, it gets little further than the inevitable (and suitably muted) male gang-bang by courtesy of *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. (Alan Alda, Vic Morrow, Kristoffer Tabori; director, Tom Gries.)

**IMAGES

(Hemdale)
Robert Altman depicts a woman succumbing to schizophrenia through a series of crystalline images which make no distinction between hallucination and 'reality'. The disquieting atmosphere of contagious insanity is rather vitiated by an overly schematic structure, but pictures here speak louder than ideas. (Susannah York, Rene Auberjonois.) Reviewed.

INNOCENT BYSTANDERS

(Scotia-Barber)
Crisp but formula postscript to the spy thriller cycle, with sundry agents on the trail of a missing Russian scientist and the familiar Cook's tour of locations. Peter Collinson for once directs without excess, but that's the only novelty. (Stanley Baker, Geraldine Chaplin, Dana Andrews.)

*JEREMIAH JOHNSON

(Columbia-Warner)
Ex-soldier flees from 19th century civilisation and graduates in the Rocky Mountains wilderness from greenhorn trapper to semi-legendary hero. Sydney Pollack's characteristic humour and mock-epic grandeur barely compensate for a sad lack of detail and a rambling storyline. (Robert Redford, Will Geer, Stefan Gierasch.) Reviewed.

KANSAS CITY BomBER

(MGM-EMI)
Raquel Welch as a roller derby queen torn between Love, Duty as a Mother, and the Big Time. Her sufferings, for which the terrible

script is as much to blame as anything, leave mercifully little time for the absurd exposé of the string-pulling that supposedly goes on behind the scenes in this mysterious sport. (Kevin McCarthy; director, Jerrold Freedman.)

LADY CAROLINE LAMB

(MGM-EMI)
Robert Bolt's trivialising approach to period wastes a potentially intriguing subject. His notorious heroine, notching up her glamorous conquests, comes over as a kind of early 19th century groupie, and the portrayal is rivalled for vulgarity by Richard Chamberlain's mascara'd matinée idol of a Byron. (Sarah Miles, Jon Finch.)

*LIFE AND TIMES OF JUDGE ROY BEAN, THE

(Cinerama)
Instant folklore from John Huston. A two-hour Western burlesque, strongly reminiscent of *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* but overblown and self-indulgent. The title role looks a little heavy on Paul Newman, who gets upstaged by a bear. (Stacy Keach, Ava Gardner, Anthony Perkins.) Reviewed.

**LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON

(Gala)
Rohmer's *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* under its borrowed English title. The sixth and last moral tale, rounding off the cycle of chance and choice with Frédéric, the happily married man, and his afternoons with Chloé. Subtle, absorbing, Rohmerian. (Bernard Verley, Zouzou.) Reviewed.

MADE

(MGM-EMI)
The trials of a South London working girl, coping with her fatherless child, an ill and demanding mother, the persistently good intentions of a young minister and some brief joy with a drifting pop singer. Sociological pertinence and melodramatic decline and fall offset one another to poor advantage. (Carol White, John Castle, Roy Harper; director, John Mackenzie.)

**MAGIC DONKEY, THE

(Target)
Jacques Demy's *Peau d'Ane*, a finely decorated fairytale which works some effective sidelong changes on the mood of Perrault's original. But literal fairytale material actually forestalls some of the Demy magic in a film least successful when its director is trying most to be himself. (Catherine Deneuve, Jean Marais, Delphine Seyrig.)

**MILLHOUSE, A WHITE COMEDY

(VPS)
Items from the life and times of Richard Milhous Nixon, who emerges with little credit and less credibility in Emile de Antonio's jaundiced collage. Often devastating, but it's not quite the hatchet job it might have been, and the President is obviously impervious.

OFFENCE, THE

(United Artists)
The offence is that the claustrophobia of a John Hopkins play—with its harrowing turnabout of roles between policeman and suspect during an interrogation—has been frittered away into melodramatic banality. Superb performance, though, from Ian Bannen in a cast otherwise surprisingly at sea. (Sean Connery, Trevor Howard, Vivien Merchant; director, Sidney Lumet.)

OTHER, THE

(Fox)
Childish imagination runs amok during the endless summer of '35—a dead twin is called up to play the part of wicked alter ego, grandmother plays with personality projection, and an ancestral curse vies with family madness. Robert Mulligan's generous attention to

detail and atmosphere is stretched to cover every homicidal aberration and intimation of doom. (Uta Hagen, Chris Udvornoky, Martin Udvornoky.)

POPE JOAN

(Columbia-Warner)
How a 9th century preacher's daughter came to sit on St. Peter's throne, use womanly intuition to settle diplomatic dilemmas, and finally be seduced by the Holy Roman Emperor. A tall story, and as Michael Anderson stodgily directs it, no one could possibly believe it. (Liv Ullmann, Trevor Howard, Maximilian Schell.)

PRECINCT 45—LOS ANGELES POLICE

(Columbia-Warner)
George C. Scott and Stacy Keach prowling the LA streets in a patrol car, observing the diverse faces of human corruption and having their lives slowly blighted in the process. Despite an injection of fashionable chase sequences, it isn't *The French Connection*—or even the 87th Precinct. (Director, Richard Fleischer.)

RAGMAN'S DAUGHTER, THE

(Fox)
Alan's Sillitoe's story of a working-class drifter and his thieving partnership with the *nouveau riche* girl who comes along for the ride. Uneven, disruptively updated, and blighted by a lyrical haze which blots out the social observation and leaves the Nottingham settings looking like anywhere and nowhere. (Simon Rouse, Victoria Tennant; director, Harold Becker.)

**RUPTURE, LA

(Contemporary)
Chabrol observes the power of love to conquer whatever warps human minds and feelings—drugs, power, money, greed—through a chilling yet compassionate tale of a mother's fight to retain custody of her young son and her sanity. Stéphane Audran superb as the mother, but the concluding flights of psychedelic fantasy are somewhat less felicitous. (Jean-Pierre Cassel, Michel Bouquet.)

SALZBURG CONNECTION, THE

(Fox)
Absurd adaptation of Helen MacInnes' best-selling thriller about a treasure chest of Nazi secrets. A multitude of agents buzz round pretty Salzburg locations trying to avoid the tourists, and somewhere in the crowd sense and credibility get irretrievably lost. (Barry Newman, Anna Karina; director, Lee H. Katzin.)

**SOUNDER

(Fox)
Echoes of Gorki's *Out in the World* in Martin Ritt's look at poor Southern farmers in the 1930s. Occasionally flawed by liberal moralising, but held together by gritty authenticity, excellent playing from mainly black cast, and strikingly shot landscapes. (Paul Winfield, Cicely Tyson, Kevin Hooks.)

*TRIPLE ECHO, THE

(Hemdale)
Michael Apted's version of H. E. Bates' story begins with cliché rurality (jolly woodwind music, Mummerset accents) and ends in high melodrama, but in between settles into a sensitive account of a precarious wartime romance. Good performances all round, with Oliver Reed enjoying himself hugely as the wolfish sergeant. (Glenda Jackson, Brian Deacon.)

**WHEN THE LEGENDS DIE

(Fox)
Strikingly gentle, quizzical adaptation of Hal Borland's novel about an Indian mountain boy (Frederic Forrest) who becomes a rodeo star and finds himself trapped between the old ways and the new. Stunning performance by Richard Widmark as the ageing cowboy who both befriends and destroys him. (Luana Anders; director, Stuart Miller.)



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